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NEW STATESMAN

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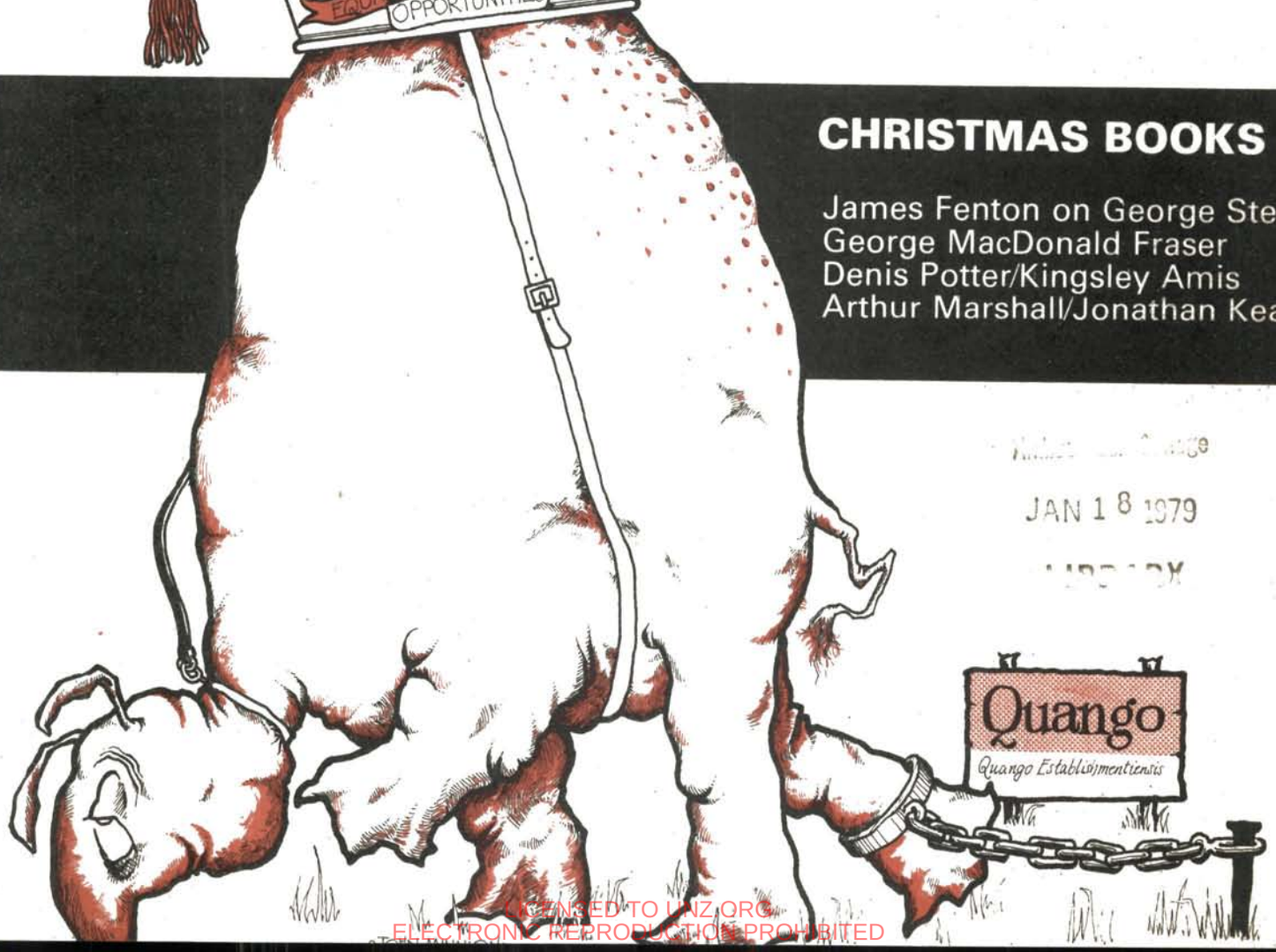
JAN 18 1979



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LABOUR & EUROPE

NOT LONG AGO, conservatives were discreetly optimistic that Labour might disintegrate over the European issue. It was a particular moment in the permanent campaign through which the Right tries to seduce us into the belief that British radicalism will never be healthful until the 'true Social Democrats' have been brave enough to divorce themselves from the 'Marxist ideologues' who stand supposedly on their left. Such a cleavage has not occurred, because after every vicissitude there remains a sound instinct which informs Labour that a fragmented Left would be no match for the British conservative interest; one as cunning, ductile and relentless as any to be found among the industrialised nations. Nonetheless, the damage done was substantial. Labour leaders *were* found ready to stand with Enoch Powell in an attempt to exploit the rich veins of chauvinism and xenophobia which political sophisticates claim – with aspiration, happily, rather than success – to perceive in the British working class. It is more appropriate now to recall the cynical victors of that period – Mr Callaghan affecting the pronunciation 'non, mercy bowkoo' when the intricacy of his ambition required (as it may again) anti-Europeanism – than the unlucky losers of the referendum campaign, amongst whom there were certainly idealists as well as opportunists. But we must not forget, if the grisly banner of 'national sovereignty' is going to be dusted off again, that a socialist party which becomes prey to chauvinism loses its right to exist, and that the British Labour Party now stands in danger of becoming quite manifestly the most chauvinistic of Europe's major socialist groups.

In the past few months we have seen Labour's near-total refusal to interest or involve itself in the European elections or the integration of Europe's socialist and social-democratic parties. We have also seen the arguments against the European Monetary System (where the NEW STATESMAN was among the earliest critics) spill over into a desire to reopen the issue of membership itself.

If it happens this way, it will do real damage to the socialist cause. The case, not just for staying grudgingly in Europe but for taking an active part in its affairs, is this. Britain cannot go it alone in her post-imperial decline, and if European cooperation does not supervene then American tutelage will. That process is dangerously advanced as it is – there is no country in Europe more abjectly subservient to Washington than Britain, and if the Left is satisfied with this version of the status quo it should say so. European institutions, however imperfectly formed they are at the moment, do offer the chance of taming and disciplining the trans-national corporations and matching the concentration of capital by the concentration of labour. It is for this reason that socialists in Spain, Portugal and Greece are generally eager to enter the EEC and end the situation where their countries are a prey to outside concessionaires. As for the 'overvaluing' of our currency, it has been going on for years at the hands of the City of London, and we all know what 'internationalism' means to that body – South Africa and South America and quick returns on capital. Once again the question – what is reactionary about Europe that is not already reactionary about Britain?

The pro-European strategy does not guarantee success, though it may be said that the anti-European position does guarantee failure. Membership and participation do not absolve us from any of the other battles we have to fight, and they do not mean that we should not dispute some of the costs of membership, especially in agriculture and fishing. But it would be futile to pretend that the option of a lone Britain, with its incredibly backward and conservative institutions, is one which socialists can take (if they ever could).

It was Gaitskell, the man who attempted to remove even vestigial socialism from the party, who began the campaign to identify Labour with political territory which the Conservatives had decided to abandon. It was, successively, Wilson and Callaghan who used the issue in opposition to hoodwink the Left into trusting their instincts. We are now in a situation where, even if we started with enthusiasm tomorrow, we would have an enormous lag of confidence to make up with our brother and sister parties on the mainland. As matters stand, we do at least have the chance of contesting major issues in a European context, of making that the terrain of the future. And there are few disputes (including the much-ignored question of Irish reunification) which cannot be more intelligently joined in that way than in the 'offshore island''. As R. H. Tawney said in 1949:

> An integration of Europe, whatever its precise form, has reason on its side; but the natural human egotisms of interest and emotion; of locality, class and occupation; of regional loyalties and national pride, will rally to resist it.

Does Labour really want to be numbered among them?

NOTES

The drift to Mugabe

Christopher Hitchens writes: A report on the state of affairs in Rhodesia has been sent to the Prime Minister and Dr Owen. It represents a month's work by Alex Lyon, MP and his assistant Clare Short, who spent their time mainly in Rhodesia but also in the 'front line' periphery. Mr Lyon has made himself unpopular with this government over racial matters in the past; it would be a pity if his findings were set aside for that reason, as they coincide with many other independent reports. What he discerned in Rhodesia itself was a steady drift of support from Bishop Muzorewa to Robert Mugabe, and a growing fear that Britain is too heavily committed to the installation of Joshua Nkomo as President of the new Zimbabwe – with or without elections.

The sheer nastiness of the present war in Rhodesia makes it every day more likely that there will be a subsequent civil war between ZANU and ZAPU if the unity of the Front Line Presidents and the twin Patriotic Front leaders is damaged. Mr Lyon believes that British partiality towards Joshua Nkomo and Kenneth Kaunda makes this outcome more probable, and thereby strengthens the short-term bargaining position of Smith.

Ominously, Mr Lyon and Ms Short found support for Nkomo and Mugabe tending to divide along tribal lines, with the former drawing heavily on Ndebele around Bulawayo. This has only intensified the distrust which exists between the two wings; a distrust magnified on Mugabe's side by the private meeting between Smith and Nkomo and by the opening of the border between Rhodesia and Zambia. 'Option B' in the Foreign Office position paper seems to the Tanzanians and Mozambicans a 'get-out clause' which would justify British support for Nkomo without elections.

Since Nyerere broke diplomatic relations with Britain on this issue once before – when we were dealing with Smith without electoral guarantees – it can be assumed that he does not hold his present position lightly. Foreign Office reaction to this most recent report will no doubt be affected by the allegation that it listens only to Zambian sources and to our High Commission in Lusaka, while all the time the internal settlement is collapsing and the mass movement is slipping away towards Mugabe and his troops.

Risks at Aldermaston

Duncan Campbell writes: The safety record of one of the Defence Ministry's most sensitive establishments – the Aldermaston atomic weapons centre – has now been thoroughly scrutinised under a public spotlight, and found thoroughly deficient. Many changes will take place as the centre returns to normal operation. The safety report by government medical adviser Sir Edward Pochin, which was published last week, notes a remarkable unconcern over the importance of health and safety factors in an establishment concerned with one of the riskiest production lines imaginable.

Underlying this are some examples – documented at length in the report – of systematic misunderstanding or ignorance of the factors neccessary for safety. Time, money, and perhaps more was wasted on equipment which didn't do the right job, or was installed in the wrong place, or even increased the risk. For example:

- Many rooms where radioactive material is handled have to have considerable ventilation to avoid risk of contamination. The entire volume of air in a room may be changed as often as once every 80 seconds, a factor which is actually irrelevant, as the vast air flow may not even disturb some surfaces where radioactive dust lingers. The 'basic concept' was 'erroneous'.
- Water sprays were used in an attempt to prevent dust rising; in fact this precaution would result in more fine dust being suspended in the atmosphere. This was 'detrimental' to health.
- Tests of plutonium exposure of Aldermaston workers were done only by taking urine samples, even though other nuclear experimental centres had known for years that this was irrelevant to the major hazard – the breathing of plutonium as dust. The discovery of plutonium concentrations in several workers' lungs was a major factor behind the recent inquiry.

Examples like these demonstrated the extent to which the real safety issue was fudged, even when genuine concern was being exercised. Even this was not always the case – the health physics establishment was well below strength, and management and training difficulties as well as lack of staff had intensified bad practices.

Of more concern still, perhaps, is the demonstration of systematic errors in understanding science and technology by a section of the nuclear industry, even when it was their lives on the line. It should be said that practices at British Nuclear Fuels' Windscale plant and elsewhere reportedly compare very favourably with Aldermaston. But one systematic misunderstanding is still perpetrated by all parties: the concept of a 'safe' level of radiation exposure, which underpins much of the analysis in the Pochin report, and of course any assessment of the risks of nuclear power. Just one radioactive particle may start a cancerous cell, and any increase will magnify

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the hazard to health, even if little more than background level. The issue then shifts to containing radiation to 'permissible' or 'recommended' levels. And who judges the 'permissibility' of giving another cancer?

Freeloading in Namibia

Roger Murray writes: Journalists at the United Nations Headquarters in New York have found themselves in the thick of a major controversy following an invitation from the South African Government to spend 10 days in Namibia reporting next Monday's internal elections which it describes as 'country-wide elections based on universal adult suffrage'. While the South African Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Bernadus Fourie, has been busy assuring the UN Secretary-General Dr Kurt Waldheim that Pretoria is willing to cooperate in implementing the UN plan for elections next year, the text of the invitation makes interesting reading. A letter signed by David Steward, the South African Chargé d'Affaires in New York, and dated 30 October, conveyed an invitation on behalf of the Administrator-General of Namibia, Judge Marthinue Steyn: 'Because of the historical and political importance of the occasion, I have pleasure in inviting you to the Territory for the process of observing the electorial (sic) process. It is suggested that you arrive in the Territory between 27 November 1978 and 4 December 1978 for a visit of up to 10 days prior to, during or after the election period. I am looking forward to having the opportunity of meeting you personally in Windhoek. Signed: M. T. Steyn, Administrator-General.' The covering letter continued: 'The Administrator-General is prepared to bear the cost of your visit.'

The invitation was extended to 17 journalists in their capacity as UN-accredited correspondents. What particularly incensed officials of UNCA, the UN Correspondents Association, was less the offer of a free trip than the apparent attempt to set up a situation in which it could be claimed that the UN in some form had taken part in the proceedings, and the fact that the invitation was exclusively directed to Western correspondents, although UNCA has several, although too few, African and third world members. Inquiries by one veteran observer of UN affairs, journalist Alec Collett, failed to obtain a prior assurance from the South Africans as to whether or not the group of UNCA journalists invited would be able to travel freely and have full access to individuals, rather than being obliged to travel about in a group at all times. A majority of the news organisations invited – most of which in any case have long-standing house regulations precluding the acceptance of free trips – declined the invitation. Only two correspondents – from the BBC and Reuters – accepted the initial invitation.

The South African Embassy in Washington has confirmed that up to 100 persons from various countries had been invited by Judge Steyn. Americans invited included heads of major foundations, jurists and some strong critics of apartheid, such as Millard Arnold, a Washington attorney who directs the South African programme of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, who had twice before been refused visas for South Africa. John Knowles, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, and McGeorge Bundy, head of Ford Foundation, publicly announced they had turned down their invitations.

Paying for students

Francis Wheen writes: The National Union of Students is holding an emergency conference in London this weekend to discuss the reforms of student union financing suggested by the Department of Education and Science. Students in receipt of mandatory awards currently have their annual union subscription – sometimes as much as £50 per capita – paid by their local education authority, which then has 90 per cent of the sum reimbursed by the DES. Following consultations with interested parties the DES issued a discussion paper in May this year, which proposed that unions should receive a maximum of about £15 from local authorities and, 'to cover the cost of all but the minimum level of student union activity', would have to negotiate a subvention from their host institutions to make up the sum.

This move was designed to stem criticism of student unions' alleged lack of accountability for the large sums of public money they consume – £13 million in 1976-77 – without impinging on their autonomy. Many unions feel, however, that having to negotiate a subvention direct from their college would reduce not only their independence – since the money could be awarded conditionally – but also their income, since they would be competing with academic departments for a slice of the same cake. Recognition of this unease came last week with the announcement by Mr Gordon Oakes, Minister of State at the DES, that, while the government still intends to go ahead with its original scheme in the absence of any acceptable alternative, it might now prove necessary to defer its introduction until the academic year 1980-81 to allow time for further consultations. Although the DES proposals are far from perfect, they do at least represent a heartening victory for the Department over the Treasury, which wanted to interfere with the NUS's independence as well.

Intelligence fantasies

Duncan Campbell writes: The lobbyists of the right have hit back at the allegations of Mr Sia Zand – the Iranian defector who claims that certain British journalists have been in the pay of the Shah of Iran – in a burst of fantasy which illuminates them rather than Zand. In the *New York Times* of 23 November 'British Intelligence Sources known for a generally hard line attitude' are quoted on the subject of Mr Zand, who, they say, 'has been taken over by "the Agee ring" ' – said to be a group of writers and activists who were friendly with CIA critic Philip Agee. The 'sources' ventured one name of this Agee circle – mine. Because of these taunts, Mr Zand was not to be trusted.

Mr Zand has not met me, or indeed anyone who might be part of an 'Agee ring' as described. The incident points to a clear and no doubt witting fantasy being perpetrated by some sections of British intelligence agencies and their lobbyists, namely that any critic of their activities is a servant of Moscow, orchestrated by *bêtes noires* like Agee.

Mr Zand's allegations still await substantiation, although it is notable that the Iranian embassy has admitted the practice of giving expensive gifts to journalists. Embassy spokesmen have helpfully refuted any suggestion that Mr Zand was 'a puppet of communists or Trotskyites'.

The fantasies of 'British intelligence sources' will also leave their mark elsewhere this week. Attorney-General Sam Silkin is to face a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party this Thursday to explain why he allowed 'unsubstantiated' and 'oppressive' charges under Section One of the Official Secrets Act to be brought in the recent trial on the recommendation of security advisers.

The old, old Nixon

I like a drink as much as anyone: critics, indeed, may say this is an under-estimate. And if you edit a newspaper, even a small one like the NS, there's no shortage of occasions on which you can have one, or several, without paying.

But there are some invitations I find myself refusing. In October for instance, there was the card entitling the bearer to celebrate at the Soviet Embassy the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Now, I'm quite ready to do specific business with the controllers of the Soviet Union: asking, for instance, about human rights in their country, or about their latest methods of refining titanium. But I'm not ready to swig champagne with them on the anniversary of a socialist revolution the aspirations of which were butchered long ago.

Of course, this is an awkward matter for a reporter. In order to do one's job, one must be meek and gentle with all kinds of butchers. Certainly I would not give 10p for any reporter who claims to understand the condition of modern Britain, but who has not spent some time leaning on a bar while some National Frontsman expounds his unlovely theories. (One never knows how much of one's modest demeanour is professional detachment, and how much is pragmatic judgment about the number of bodies blocking one's passage to the door.)

There seems to be no test except the instinctive one of the irresistibly rising gorge. Others may differ; but my own gorge passed the Plimsoll mark on the arrival of an invitation from Lord Longford to lunch luxuriously with Richard Nixon and some large gathering of London wits and intellectuals. It was, I think, the wording of the card that did it: Guest of *Honour* the *Honourable* Richard Nixon. Coming from a self-appointed guardian of public morals, it seemed a little rich. Should we *honour* the man who tried to subvert American democracy? Nixon is, of course, entitled to free speech. Any time he has something to say, there's a soapbox at Hyde Park Corner. And why shouldn't Lord Longford, who likes to reform hard cases, buy him a warming lunch afterwards? But it would be wrong to imagine that the Longford shindig, or Nixon's visit to the Oxford Union, have anything to do with the free passage of information. Nixon, as usual, will say nothing he has not said before, and those who attend will learn no more that the visitors to a raree-show.

Nixon, however, is satisfied with such an exchange, for his business at the moment is to restore himself as a force in American politics by 'collecting' naïve and, where possible, distinguished audiences outside America. (It was always his pitch that 'the world' was more appreciative than his own ungrateful people.) He will not be a Presidential candidate again, but he is on the way to being a Republican kingmaker – and Lord Longford and the Oxford Union have received a small part in the script. Soon, we shall be reading about another 'new Nixon', and it may be wise to recall what one veteran American editor said last time a product was launched under that name, in 1968. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'there is no "new Nixon". There is just the old Nixon, a little older.'

Bruce Page

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POLITICAL ECONOMY
Christopher Hird and Patrick Wintour

Once again, 'sanctions' which aren't meant to work

Government by charade

THE GOVERNMENT's sanctions policy to deal with companies which break the pay code – launched this week against Ford – is little more than a public relations gloss on the exhortations for wage control. The sanctions are far from penal and, it is clear from talking to officials in Whitehall, that is the way it is meant to be. In most worlds, such a policy – which aims to deter potential offenders by punishing actual offenders quite lightly – might seem doomed to failure. However, it happens that keeping up the pretence is in the interest of both the government and the CBI – who, it seems, will not launch any real attack on sanctions. So the wages policy, however unreal, will stumble on.

Ford cannot have been surprised by the government's decision. Despite the ingenious arguments of Ford chairman Sir Terence Beckett, the increase clearly broke the Phase 4 pay guidelines. Furthermore, before the negotiations started the government made it abundantly clear to Ford that they could expect sanctions to be taken against them if they broke the guidelines. Throughout the negotiations, the company was in close touch with the government.

The fearsomeness of this first warning is almost certainly the explanation for what appears to be Ford's incompetent handling of the wage negotiations. They themselves knew that a 5 per cent wage offer would cause a lot of trouble. Ford is a successful and profitable company and the workers know it – partly as a result of the detailed and well publicised wage claim which the T&G produced with the help of Ruskin College and which forecast 1978 profits of over £300 million.

With this background it surprised many people – including some government departments – when Ford made their opening offer of 5 per cent coupled with a willingness to talk about productivity deals. This provoked a walkout at many of Ford's plants and started the nine week strike.

Fortuitously for the unions, soon after this opening offer the Ford Auto Workers Council met in London. This gave the T&G's chief negotiator, Ron Todd, the opportunity to talk to European union leaders. Their support for the British workers surprised Todd, and in the coming weeks some European plants refused to work overtime when they suspected that Ford were trying to replace British production. The integration of Ford worldwide also put pressure on the company to settle: Sir Terence Beckett admits that the strike had effects as far afield as New Zealand, Taiwan and Korea.

In the end Ford have offered an increase of almost 10 per cent on basic pay and a 'no strike' bonus worth a further 5 per cent. Earlier in the negotiations this extra payment was to be an attendance allowance to stop absenteeism, but the idea was dropped. In defending the deal to the government Ford have argued that all of the increase over 5 per cent will be paid for if they manage to halve the number of unofficial strikes. Ford say that last year they lost five million work hours through 644 unofficial strikes and lost £100 million of profit; the wage increase over the 5 per cent level will cost them just over £30 million.

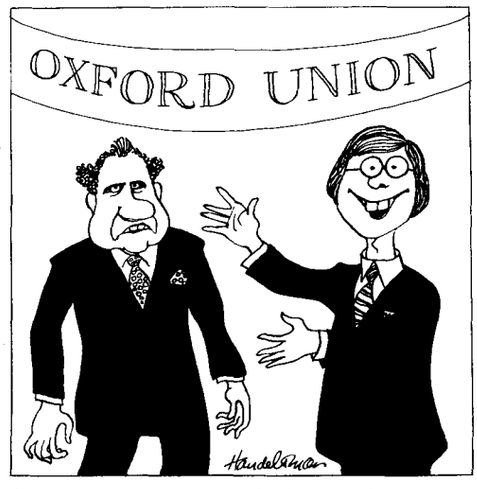
The government, however, were not convinced. The guidelines, if taken seriously, are quite clear in stating that no pay increase shall be higher than 5 per cent, except in the case of the low paid. In addition, productivity schemes must demonstrate increased productivity *before* any payments are made, and the benefits of them are meant to be shared between the consumers and the company, as well as the workers. It is quite clear that the Ford deal does not fit these requirements.

It is also clear that the sanctions are not going to hurt the company. The government will stop buying from Ford and ask the nationalised industries to do so as well (on past form they will agree). Also, the government will stop providing the company with discretionary grants under its industrial assistance schemes.

The best estimate of the annual sales of Ford products to the government and the nationalised industries are £60 million – less than 3 per cent of total Ford sales. Ford lost eight times this in the nine week strike alone. The government is already committed to providing regional grants for the new factory in Bridgend in South Wales, and many of these grants were non-discretionary anyway. Most of the remainder of Ford's £1 billion four-year investment programme will qualify for the normal capital allowances against tax, and there is nothing the government can do about this.

But the government is not interested in imposing punitive sanctions. Since pay policy started, sanctions of one sort or another have been used against a total of 99 companies (most of these were on the Phase 3 'black list'). In addition, a small number of companies were considered for sanctions but the Cabinet decided against imposing them. They have considered, for instance, the implications on employment, investment, the company's financial health and the availability of alternative supplies.

It is this very unpredictability in the sanctions policy which the CBI dislikes: companies know they run the risk of having sanctions imposed but they don't know whether they will be serious.



'Dr Mengele was unavailable, but fortunately we have with us today...'

On Wednesday the President's Committee of the CBI – its inner cabinet – met to consider what they should do in the wake of the Ford affair. Earlier this year they managed to persuade their members to impose a six-week boycott on taking new contracts from the government. The significance of this seems small: with a specified time span, there was no danger of anyone losing any work. Any further attempt at employer solidarity – which Sir John wants – would probably founder on companies' anxiety to take advantage of any market opportunities. The extreme action which the CBI has talked about does not amount to much: withdrawing from the industrial strategy, and non-cooperation over government statistical enquiries.

There is also a certain ambiguity in the CBI's attitude to pay policy and sanctions. They don't like the 5 per cent guideline because it is too rigid: it is not easy to restore wage differentials for skilled labour. Their opposition to sanctions revolves, to a large extent, around a feeling that it is wrong to punish companies when it is union militants who make the wage claims. But at the same time the CBI approves of a 5 per cent guideline and has certainly found it useful in negotiations. In other words, employers want a 5 per cent guideline with sanctions against workers who do not accept what companies offer – though they are not keen on a statutory prices and incomes policy. It is hard to present this as a coherent policy.

There is a further ambiguity in the CBI's attitude to its relationship with government. This is exemplified by an argument last year over the CBI's own proposals for the long term reform of collective bargaining, which include tripartite negotiations to set a norm for each pay round. The centralist aspects of this policy were too much for the CBI rank and file, who rejected the document.

Many of the Tory businessmen's criticisms of Star Chamber secrecy, illegality and contempt for parliament are misinformed. As long ago as the 1975 White Paper the government said it would

> also take account of a firm's record of observance of the pay limit in its general provisions policy and in the awarding of contracts. From now on, the Government in handling applications for assistance under the Industry Act 1972 will interpret the national interest as including the observance of the pay limit.

As for secrecy in its implementation, there is a clear written procedure to follow. Firms with a government contract who make a pay settlement have to inform the Department of Employment, who then say if they believe the payment is over the norm. The company then have a chance to renegotiate their pay settlement or explain themselves before Employment hands the issue over to the Treasury. Any secrecy

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that there is exists largely because the CBI have told the government that they do not want blacklisted companies named.

Much of the unpredictability of the policy of which John Methven complains arises because the Department of Employment may miss a particular pay deal or its complexities. There is no necessity for any firm which does not have a government contract to inform the Department of its pay deals. In their search for breakers of the pay code the 81-strong DoE incomes division have to rely on their own research, the scanning of local papers, their regional offices and their knowledge of when a particular pay settlement is normally due. Furthermore, the government just does not have the resources to check the productivity deals which firms are introducing in an attempt to avoid the guidelines. One in ten firms gave a productivity deal last year. This year the productivity element is often twice the basic 5 per cent increase. The effect of this, even if the deals are not totally self-financing, is that shop stewards are doing just the opposite of what David Basnett asked them to do in his crusade for the 35-hour week: bargaining away jobs.

As yet, however – according to the CBI data bank – only 570,000 employees in the private sector have settled. Treasury figures show that the number of settlements is 60 per cent down on the equivalent period last year, and that last year's settlements were themselves 50 per cent down on the previous year. It seems the pay round is becoming more concentrated around the end of the year and, in addition, a number of negotiators have been delayed by the possibilities of a general election, an accord between the TUC and the government – and Ford's.

So there is a good deal still for Callaghan to play for. A major difficulty, though, will be to decide whether the productivity deals are genuine. It seems already that ASTMS and TASS, in areas of skilled labour shortages, have quite comprehensively broken 5 per cent. Nor is it likely that Sir Terence Beckett's scheme to end unofficial strikes will really work. There will possibly be no immediate test to this clause, since workers will be too busy working Christmas overtime. But afterwards they may feel that a weekly £3.50 bonus (£2.50 after tax) is occasionally worth losing, to assert the authority of the shopfloor. Moreover it seems the bonus is not closely tied to personal good behaviour. The bonus will be lost if a worker is laid off as a result of unofficial action in other plants. The bonus may very quickly come to be resented and then ignored. After the 1969 strike Ford introduced an Income Security Plan, in effect a holiday bonus, to be forfeited if there were unofficial strikes. The scheme failed.

The government's policy of exhortation and bluster may indeed be the only way to control wages in the absence of a comprehensive incomes policy which deals with profits and investment – the sort of policy for which the NS, among others, has argued. The government's response to Ford, as the first big claim, was a key part of their policy but many feel that, ironically, if the negotiations had been conducted in a different atmosphere the settlement might have been lower and the strike over sooner.

EDUCATION — Rick Rogers

Education Bill: half a loaf from Shirley Williams

EDUCATION BILL GIVES PARENTS STRONGER SAY IN CHOICE OF SCHOOL said *The Times*. NEW EDUCATION BILL AIMS TO RESTRICT PARENTS' CHOICE countered *The Guardian*. So either it's a stroke of political genius by Shirley Williams, or someone's got it wrong.

In fact, of course, it's the classic pre-election Bill – something for everyone and nothing very radical. A dishonest Bill, too; for the key issues have been kept back to be sorted out behind the scenes, and published as regulations – separate from the Bill. Not surprisingly, it's those more practical parts of the Bill – like the actual extent of the implementation of the Taylor recommendations – which the customers (parents, teachers, pupils) are most concerned about.

Only half a loaf, said the Confederation for the Advancement of State Education. Cautiously optimistic, said the National Association of Governors and Managers. A small step forward, said the National Union of School Students. NAGM does feel that the acceptance of pupil governors from the age of 16 is a minor victory. The DES has always opposed them, claiming that current legislation on the age of majority made the idea a non-starter for pupils under 18.

In short, though, it's a disappointment to many of the pressure groups. Legislating for yesterday, was how one consumer spokesman put it. The Bill 'legitimises' much that is already here. Over 80 per cent of authorities now have parent governors and teacher governors. The majority of parents can state some sort of preference at secondary school transfer – within the continuing limitations of LEA expense and school efficiency. Training programmes for governors have mushroomed.

But Mrs Williams has at least set down some much needed directives – the obligation on LEAs to provide parents with detailed information about local schools; the requirement to define publicly an admissions policy for secondary schools; and the power for LEAs to fix the operating capacity of schools in the light of falling rolls. All these get strong support from the parent groups.

The Bill sets out to democratise, though not entirely, the governing boards of voluntary schools – reducing the Church's automatic two-thirds majority to two for boards of up to 18 members, and three for larger boards.

On grouping – a single governing body for more than one school – NAGM is critical. They feel it is not strong enough to prevent LEAs from making the education committee the governing body for its schools – as happens in Manchester.

The Bill is dishonest because it fails to come clean on the issue of parental choice. There is no philosophy behind it. It fails to provide a framework within which parents can judge the fairness of any admissions policy. Nor does it explain that there are more important things for parents to pursue than a specious form of parental choice of school.

Most crucial of all, there is nothing about the proportion of parent and teacher places on governing bodies; nothing about whether pupil places will be mandatory or discretionary.

These points will, it is claimed, be decided and published as regulations after the DES's usual consultation procedure. But at this stage the DES seems to be opting for a minimum figure of two parents and two teachers for each body – too few for any radical change. If so, the danger is that the minimum number is taken by LEAs to be the maximum. And although Mrs Williams seems to have given herself a bit more flexibility in amending articles of government, we could be stuck with the two-plus-two arrangement for some time to come.

Value for money in rural schools

MORE EVIDENCE that small schools are not so expensive to run after all comes from the Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils. They are putting round figures which show that the cost of educating a primary school child in the 12 most rural counties (where the small schools are) is only £3 more than the national average of £321. Some rural counties have a higher average cost – Cumbria with £344 and Suffolk with £343, for example – but it's urbanised Bedfordshire that comes out top with spending per pupil of £401 a year. The major costs – teachers' salaries, support staff, books, equipment, and materials – all come out, on average, about the same. So with rural counties having a slightly better pupil/teacher ratio, that extra £3 seems a good deal.

However, small-school sympathisers should view such figures with caution and, in some cases, not a little concern. Four rural counties – Cornwall, Shropshire, Somerset and Wiltshire – spend well below the national average: some £20 per pupil a year less. That may sound good news for ratepayers, but it's bad news for children. There seems little point in endorsing inadequate spending in order to keep a school going.

The joys of alternative education

STATE-SUPPORTED alternative education – that's the long-term aim of a conference next weekend organised by the Advisory Centre for Education. Some 800,000 children regularly reject school in this country and, for ACE's director Peter Newell, a comprehensive non-fee paying alternative system of education is the only practical response to this problem.

No-one really knows just how many free schools are left after the heady days of the early seventies. The latest estimate is a mere five – two in London, and one each in Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. But it's impossible to list all the other sorts of alternative or attempted alternative – from home-based tuition groups to truancy units inside and outside the system.

A stabilising and dependable grant scheme, with a minimum of official interference, would test just how many alternatives are really viable. The favourite model is the Danish one – a grant of 85 per cent of all costs to any group with 12 or more children; a 'sympathetic' system of checks on health regulations and proper use of funds; and no obligation to return children to 'normal' school.

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SPANISH POLITICS
Julie Flint

'Operation Galaxia': an attempted coup in detail

Can the Army strike again?

'DISCIPLINE, never well defined or understood! Discipline, which has no merit when the command is welcome! Discipline, which assumes its real value when thought contradicts command, when the heart struggles in intimate rebellion! This is the discipline we teach you.'

On the eve of a referendum to approve a democratic constitution, the Government of Premier Adolfo Suarez appears to have underestimated the influence of the discipline advocated by Gen. Franco in 1931 and provocatively reprinted by an ultra-Right newspaper on the third anniversary of his death, 20 November – four days after discovery of a bizarre military conspiracy to capture Suarez and demand a government of national unity to fight terrorism. Even with the plot quashed and its immediate ringleaders bagged, the Government and powerful socialist opposition are fearful that their democratic reform could be cut short by some form of military intervention.

A classic military coup is improbable. Despite an ultra-Right revival in Madrid, Spaniards are not divided, as they were in 1936. Serious violence is confined to the Basque separatist organisation ETA. What is possible, not to say probable, is some massive strike by ETA – an attack against Suarez or King Juan Carlos himself – that could get the army sent into the Basque country, or moved in nationwide to take over law and order enforcement from the already rebellious Armed Police.

THE TASK is not beyond ETA: in December 1973, in the heart of Franco's Madrid, the guerrillas tunnelled under a busy street and bombed Premier Luis Carrero Blanco six stories high. Although the Government is playing Operation Galaxia, as the November conspiracy is known, very close to the chest, it involves more than the 'couple of crazies' the government suggests. An official at the Interior Ministry, the ministry responsible for the police, admits privately that, with only two plotters arrested, a Lieutenant Colonel in the paramilitary Civil Guard and a Captain in the Armed Police, 'a hell of a lot of armed police knew about the plot.' Only one, however, talked.

The single detail of the plot officially recorded is an 11 November meeting of five conspirators in the Cafeteria Galaxia, an ultra-modern establishment opposite the Air Ministry currently displaying the graffito: 'If to the cry of "Arriba España" he does not reply "Arriba" if he's a Spaniard he isn't a man and if a man he isn't a Spaniard.' Official sources, however, set this scenario for the final days:

13 November: Let by Lt Col. Antonio Tejero Molina and Capt. Ricardo Saenz de Inestrillas, the conspirators decide on 17 November to attack Suarez's town-edge Moncloa Palace, a working residence police could approach unchallenged.

15 November: An armed policeman not among the plotters hears of the imminent coup and informs the head of the Armed Police, Jose Timon de Lara, who calls Suarez the following morning. The same evening Tejero visits former Madrid police chief Col. Federico Quintero, an old Carrero Blanco aide, to seek his support but Quintero, 'believing them crackpots', refuses. (Both Tejero and Inestrillas have reputations as troublemakers.)

16 November: Informing only the King and key ministers, Suarez is, for the next 24 hours 'very, very worried indeed'. Moncloa security is boosted with road blocks, machine gun emplacements, armed police reserves and a team of the new, anti-terrorist police. Tejero and Inestrillas are arrested in the late evening but Suarez works through the night ensuring no military units are involved.

THE OPERATION was not just a Peter Sellers conspiracy. The King was due to leave Madrid on 17 November. Defence Minister Manuel Gutierrez Mellado, and the Chiefs of the General Staff and key units were all away. Military sources insist that, with only 60 Civil Guards responsible for its security around the clock, the Moncloa could have been taken by 50 men. The official reaction doesn't support the comfortable theory that this was just a cafeteria conspiracy. Suarez has produced no evidence to support his 'crazies' claim. Why not, if that's all they were? Who were the three other conspirators of 11 November, none of whom reported the plot? Who was with them?

No word of the coup came through military intelligence. Some military complicity in the affair is undeniable: the army has acknowledged that an army commander was present at the Galaxia meeting and that other commands had already been contacted. (In Spain, the 60,000-man Civil Guard comes under army control while the 42,000-man Armed Police recruits officers from the army.)

Excuses that 'no-one took it seriously' – besides raising the awkward questions 'What if they did?' and What would they take seriously?' – ring hollow in a nation where the army was all-powerful for 40 years. Violence by ETA, which declared war on the military in July, assassinating an army general and his aide, has brought the police to rebellion and sectors of the army to simmering point. On the very day of the coup, a prestigious Civil Guard General at a discussion on the constitution in Cartagena turned on the Defence Minister, Gen. Manuel Gutierrez Mellado to considerable applause, with cries of 'Traitor'.

A self-defined 'soldier 1000 per cent', Guetierrez Mellado was recruited by Suarez to oversee the Army's retreat from politics. Although popular with Parliament and with the Army's younger generations, the small, stooping general, a Franco agent in wartime Madrid, is hated by many of his peers. In recent weeks, Guetierrez Mellado has toughened his tone with the military, cautioning 'those who seem sad there is no mood of coup' and all but naming operation Galaxia in an interview. Asked whether he smelt conspiracy in the military, he replied: 'It must be amusing to play at conspiracies, especially with a whisky in one hand or in a good restaurant. There are sometimes people addicted to solving problems around a coffee table. But I honestly do not believe any military man worth his name is thinking of anything of this kind.'

The first open dissent in the military came in April 1971 when the Navy Minister quit following the legalisation of the Communist Party. And the army issued a statement saying in essence reluctantly 'Yes'. In July 1977, to the disgust of many officers, the three military ministries were merged into a single defence ministry, raising the possibility of a civilian overlord. As October ended, Spain's only three military senators, all personal appointments of the King, either abstained or voted against the new constitution.

Most had expected greater personal loyalty

Israelis invited to 'meet the autonomy'

Ian Black writes: **This is how Israeli settlers on the occupied West Bank see the proposed Palestinian 'autonomy' which is part of the Camp David package. The poster was photographed by the** NEW STATESMAN **before it was torn down, along with many others, from the streets of Jerusalem this week. It invites the people, to 'please meet the "autonomy" '. The asterisk at bottom right declares that 'autonomy' is 'a temporary name for a Palestinian state' and the small print describes how the implementation of the scheme will mean, first, the withdrawal of the Israeli army and, second, the entry of the PLO disguised as policemen. Then will come the removal – on the pretext of a 'pogrom' against them – of Jewish settlers. Finally, there will be a pass system for Jewish residents of the new East Jerusalem suburbs. The process culminates in the declaration of independence of a Palestinian state. This, concludes the small print, is 'only a matter of time'.** PHOTO ZOOM 77.

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No hawkers. No trespassers. No slick operators.

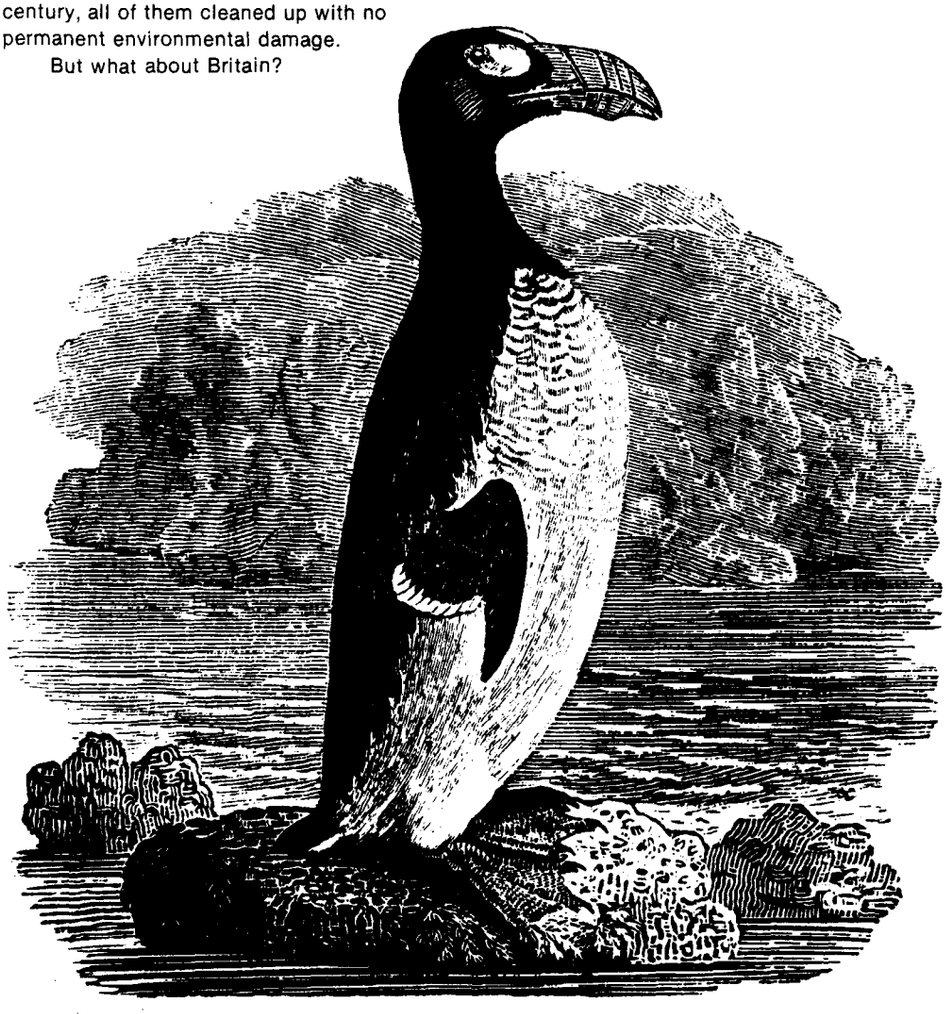
Not so many years ago the North Sea was the uninvaded home of sea creatures and birds. Then man came and fought over its rugged surface, first in small boats, then in great steel ships. He began to carry oil on its surface. Sometimes he spilled it. More recently he began to drill beneath the seabed for oil and to set up huge factories on stilts to produce it — and sometimes he spills it. Well might lovers of birds and the sea creatures fear that man in his quest for oil may behave as a hawker, a trespasser and a slick operator.

The plain fact of the matter is that whenever and wherever oil must be produced there is always a risk of spillage. It is the duty of those who produce it and ship it to take every possible precaution to ensure that accidents happen as seldom as humanly possible. In the United States, where more than 20,000 wells have been drilled offshore, there have been only four serious spills in more than a quarter of a century, all of them cleaned up with no permanent environmental damage.

But what about Britain?

Each company maintains a vigilant guard against oil spills and blow-outs, and has its own disaster contingency plan and specially trained personnel to cope with emergencies.

Here in the the North Sea, safety and environmental protection start, of course, with the companies themselves — influencing everything from design and construction of drilling rigs, platforms and ships, to operating procedures, inspection schedules and training programmes. Platforms and pipelines are inspected regularly by engineers and divers. Small submarines are often used as well. Platforms in the North Sea carry resident safety specialists to monitor safety systems and ensure that they are working properly.



Through the UK Offshore Operators Association (UKOOA) oil companies have arranged access to special stocks of dispersants and spraying equipment held at UK ports. They also have access to stocks held in other countries surrounding the North Sea. In addition, companies operating in the UK and Norwegian sectors have recently formed mutual support 'brigades' — five of them — covering all UK and Norwegian fields. Members are pledged to send to each other's aid their support and fire-fighting vessels in the event of a major fire or blow-out.

Behind the companies' individual and collective contingency arrangements are those of the government. In a crisis, they can mobilise their own Blow-Out Emergency Team and in the longer term they sponsor — through the Oil Pollution Division of the Warren Springs Laboratory — vital research into development of pollution control techniques.

Government also plays a special role in containing any threat to our UK shores, whether the oil comes to the UK from wells in the North Sea, from Africa, or from the Middle East.

At the centre is the Marine Division of the Department of Trade. When danger threatens, theirs is the job of mustering and directing the country's defences. Beside them stand other government departments, including the Coastal Protection Service of the Department of the Environment, local authorities and coastguard officers — all of them with their part to play in the vital effort to preserve birds, sea life and beaches.

Still, the primary responsibility for prevention or cure lies fair and square with the oil companies, no matter where their installations are. Our job is to ensure that as far as possible no spills occur, and that if they do we can cope with them.

The restless grey waters of the North Sea have their own wild loveliness. They demand respect. No one who works upon them — as we and the other operators do — can afford to treat them lightly.

Hawkers? Yes, if you must.

Trespassers? Perhaps.

Slick operators? Certainly not. There is no place for them in the North Sea.

Seventh in a series on the challenges of North Sea Oil.
For a complete set of these advertisements write to:
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to the popular 40-year-old King, Franco's chosen successor, who has assiduously courted the armed forces since the start of reform. Of late, however, the ultra-Right led by the Fuerza Nueva party of Blas Piñar has added opposition to the King to its ritual shouts for the resurrection of Franco. In Zaragoza, crowds cheered when Blas Piñar asked rhetorically: 'and what if the King were assassinated?' With 200 meetings scheduled to urge 'No' to the referendum on 6 December, the ultra-Right, which took less than 1 per cent of the poll in last year's General Elections, is thought likely to boost its vote in Madrid to 3 per cent next time around winning its first parliamentary seat.

By 17 November, the police forces had seen 22 men fall to ETA bullets this year – almost as many as the total victims of political violence last year.The Armed Police created by Franco in 1941 served notice that their honeymoon with liberalisation was over four months ago when they shot dead two unarmed Basque demonstrators in Pamplona and San Sebastian. In October, a police wife attending funeral services for ETA's two latest victims turned on Timon de Lara with the words 'You lead the next patrol, you bastard.'

Police anger has been shamelessly exploited this year by *El Imparcial* the nasty new daily quoted above, whose editor and assistant editor were detained to make statements after the coup.

With almost 50 ETA assassinations already this year, including 10 in the first 20 days of November, the guerrillas, ominously quiet since the conspiracy, are now believed to have added mortars to their arsenal, suggesting that they are planning a savage attack on a police barracks or some important figure's home.

In the light of the military complicity and lethargy that has now been revealed, such an attack, or series of attacks, might just set the scene for the army brass to go to Juan Carlos with the message: 'Reluctantly, No.'

CIVIL LIBERTIES
Duncan Campbell

Vital battles that the Data Protection Committee lost
The secret security computers

The long awaited report of the government's Data Protection Committee – which has examined the safeguards necessary for computer databanks (NS 3 November) – is now said to be 'imminent'. Despite a delay at HMSO, substantial proportions have already been leaked. One story in the report's final draft which has not been told yet, however, is of the Committee's battle to discover any details of the computer systems used by MI5 and the Special Branch.

It is a battle the Committee, appointed by the Home Office itself, largely lost. The report ensures that this point is not missed by the reader: 'The observations we make are of value only to the extent that the information on which they are based is adequate; in the case of the Metropolitan Police we have not been able to satisfy ourselves that this is so . . . The (Met) seemed to assume that a wide exemption (from public scrutiny) would be granted for police applications.'

And so the Committee were forced to rely, in the case of the new project for computerising 1.5 million intelligence records (mostly Special Branch files), entirely on press cuttings from *The Times* and a few uninformative answers in *Hansard*. Witnesses to the Committee from the Met 'would not be drawn' but claimed that 'some of their information published was inaccurate.' One result, at least, of the police intransigence was a firm recommendation by the Committee that 'police records, including criminal intelligence records, having no bearing on national security, should not be exempted' from the scrutiny of the statutory Data Protection Authority which is intended to be set up following discussion of the report.

The report distinguishes two clear categories in the volumes of police information now being computerised: criminal information, or histories – 'hard, factual data, such as date of birth, physical description and convictions'; and criminal intelligence – 'speculative, suppositional, hearsay and unverified, such as details of associates, places frequented, suspected activities'. The committee reveals, essentially for the first time, that the enormous Police National Computer (PNC) is being used to store intelligence data as well as 'information'. The PNC holds files on all vehicles registered in Britain, criminal records, stolen and suspected vehicles, wanted and missing persons, and details of fingerprints. In introducing the system, the Home Office gave assurances that it would deal only in fact, not intelligence, and would only be concerned with greatly improving the speed of police access to hard information and not for intelligence.

It now seems that several categories of speculative information have filtered in around the edges. The PNC can link details of any of the 3.8 million persons recorded to lists of 'known associates'. The stolen/suspect vehicles file contains details of vehicles 'suspected of being used in connection with a crime', and can include 'details of association with an organisation', political or otherwise, when a police officer judges this 'relevant'. From a 1976 report on the PNC, only made available to UK and foreign police organisations, it appears that only 25% of the 120,000 vehicles in the suspect Stolen Vehicle Index are actually stolen. There are no less than ten other reasons for inclusion in the files. The same report gave an example of the PNC being used in a rape investigation – it matched part of a registration of a Ford Cortina belonging to a man in a neighbouring district 'suspected of sexual offences and entered as a suspect'. The report notes that the man was later arrested, but says nothing of any conviction. Such a tale presupposes that police are regularly entering on the national computer their personal suspicions about individuals and their vehicles. The Committee commented that this practice of 'linking factual personal information about an identifiable individual with speculative data about criminal activity could pose a grave threat to the individual's interests'.

One similar police computer project which the DPC did not report on in depth is the now four-year-old project at Oxford to computerise the local intelligence records of the Thames Valley Police. Ever since the police unit beat system was introduced, police stations have had 'collators' – 'local intelligence officers', who record the minutiae of gossip and observation as well as hard fact. A full description of this system has never been released, but a paper in a 1976 Home Office private conference, *The Use of Computers in Police Operations*, gives a full picture. The system has a capacity for 150,000 personal records, 10 per cent of the entire Thames Valley population. Almost every house and vehicle in the area will be entered in the system. At least half the records of the computerised collator will concern people who have committed no criminal offence – many of them stopped in the street because their age, race or appearance attracted attention. From the police officer's notebook, the collator will start a new computer record, and from then on, any scrap of information on that individual will be filed away for future reference. Each person can be linked to up to 100 'associates', as well as to vehicles, crimes (as a suspect or offender, or even as a victim) and 'occurrences' – non-criminal events which an officer has jotted down in his notebook. The Thames Valley computer will store 250,000 occurrences and only 120,000 crimes.

The extent of these information stores must have severe consequences for civil liberty, as the Data Protection Committee noted. The police will select for the permanent record those events which best match their particular prejudices and predispositions; their purview for attention now includes 'subversives' – very widely defined – as well as 'criminals'. On occasions when researchers have been allowed to see collators' offices, these predelictions have been apparent; one divisional office had a card index marked 'cows, queers, and flashers'. Cards for men stopped on street checks included notes that individuals were 'grossly obese' or had an 'effeminate appearance': hardly matters related to effective policing. Yet in Thames Valley, such information is the daily trade of anyone with access to the system's computer terminals. This summer, FBI visitors to the Centre were appalled to be presented with a printout from the system which, *inter alia*, noted that a policeman's wife had overheard gossip in the village shop about an individual's alleged taste for small boys. The story was untrue.

It is not impossible that the DPC report as a whole will be remembered as the ultimate in a series of important reforms neglected by the current Labour government. The DPC was appointed by Roy Jenkins and bears the stamp of earlier liberal minds, including the late Sir Kenneth Younger. Some of its recommendations are bold and helpful; it would be sad to see them follow other reforms into the pit below Merlyn Rees.

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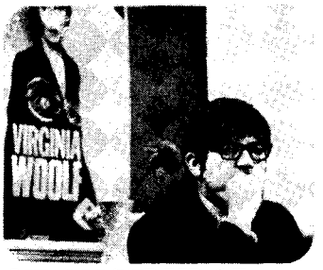
London Weekend Television is presenting six new plays by Alan Bennett . . .



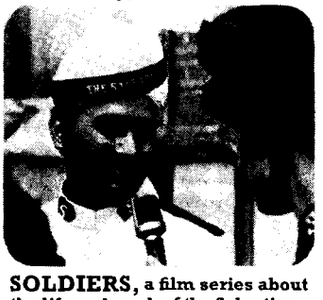
ME, I'M AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF, will be the first of six new plays by Alan Bennett to be premiered by LWT this Saturday, on ITV.

. . . Four other new LWT programmes for the ITV network started this Autumn . . .

BRUCE FORSYTH'S BIG NIGHT, the new look for Saturday night on ITV with comedy, music, games, stars and Bruce Forsyth.

LILLIE, the life, loves, career and adventures of Lillie Langtry, starring Francesca Annis as Lillie.

BLESS ME FATHER, a new comedy series, adapted by Peter De Rosa from his best selling book of the same name and starring Arthur Lowe.



SOLDIERS, a film series about the life and work of the Salvation Army.

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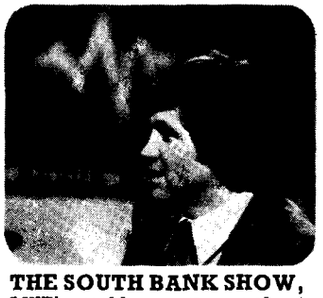
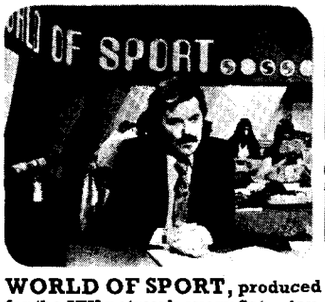


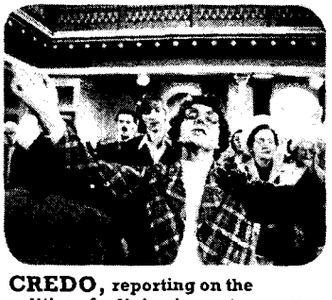
THE SOUTH BANK SHOW, LWT's weekly programme about the arts, winner of the Prix Italia Music Award for MACMILLAN'S MAYERLING; edited and presented by Melvyn Bragg.

WEEKEND WORLD, the weekly, hour-long, current affairs programme presented by Brian Walden, pictured with Merlyn Rees, the Home Secretary.



WORLD OF SPORT, produced for the ITV network every Saturday and introduced by Dickie Davies.

THE RAG TRADE, one of television's most popular comedy series, with Miriam Karlin and Peter Jones.



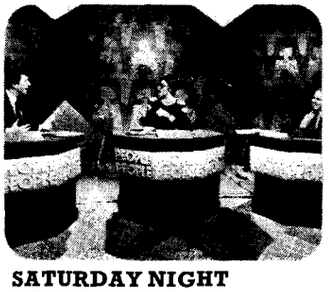
CREDO, reporting on the politics of religion in contemporary life.

MIXED BLESSINGS, warm-hearted comedy about a black and white marriage, with Christopher Blake and Muriel Odunton.

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE, with Barry Evans as the eager young optimist teaching foreigners to speak English.

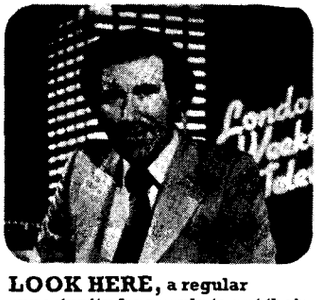
. . . and regular LWT series for London region viewers, including . . .

THE BIG MATCH, the Sunday afternoon soccer special, with Britain's top soccer commentator, Brian Moore.



SATURDAY NIGHT PEOPLE, an irreverent lampoon of people and institutions, with Russell Harty, Janet Street-Porter and Clive James.

THE LONDON PROGRAMME, the capital's own current affairs programme, introduced by Godfrey Hodgson.



LOOK HERE, a regular opportunity for people to put their views on television to the television audience, presented by Andrew Neil.

. . . and starting early in the New Year, among many new LWT programmes . . .

THOMAS AND SARAH, John Alderton and Pauline Collins in a new drama series set in the years just prior to World War I.

All produced by London Weekend Television, the ITV station on air in the London area every weekend from 7 pm Friday until close-down on Sunday.

LWT
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Equality and the curse of the Quango

What has the Equal Opportunities Commission really been doing for the last three years?

ANNA COOTE reports

Three years ago it looked as if the government was really trying to root out the injustices of sex discrimination. A law had been passed and an Equal Opportunities Commission set up with the statutory function of 'working towards the elimination of discrimination'.

But amid the fanfares and the flurry, a swindle was quietly being perpetrated. For women were not being given what they wanted – real action and real change – but an expensive illusion. The mechanism of this swindle is one of the classic devices of modern British government: Quango Establishmentiensis, *a creature bred by unnatural intercourse between the status quo and radicalism.*

The beauty of the quango, from the point of view of government, is that it can satisfy both those who want change and those who don't. Other attractive features are its autonomy and its unaccountability. Its policy-makers are not elected. It is not answerable directly to Parliament. Once the government has set it up and chosen the 'right' people to sit on it, nothing can be done to inspect or influence its work.

In short, the quango is corrupt. 'Corruption', in the Florentine definition, is the condition which exists when the public rules which are supposed to govern a society are replaced by private arrangements not disclosed to the citizenry.

The Equal Opportunities Commission spends £2 million a year and employs 170 people. Many hoped it would at least ensure that the Sex Discrimination Act was enforced. But they did not understand the nature of the quango. Three years later, large parts of the Act have still not been tested in court. The EOC has made virtually no use of its own enforcement powers. Internally, it is in a state of high chaos and deep demoralisation.

EOC chairman Baroness Lockwood (right) and deputy chairman Lady Howe.

Last month, employees of the Equal Opportunities Commission were treated to an evening of disco-dancing to celebrate the third anniversary of the day the Commission opened its doors in Quay Street, Manchester. What was most remarkable about the occasion was the number of senior staff who were missing.

David Dolton, chief executive, left in uncommon haste last June. Eileen Byrne, principal in charge of education, was sacked in 1977, then reinstated and employed on a separate project; she finally left last September. Valerie Hale, who took over as acting principal in education, resigned the same month. Jennifer Corcoran, senior legal officer, resigned in August. Sheila Rothwell, senior principal officer, has quit her full-time post to work part-time in London and will be leaving altogether in the New Year.

Four more principal officers (in charge of public relations, employment, policy and research, and personnel) have left the Commission's employment in the last three years. Only two of the ten originally appointed to senior management remain in a post today: Dipak Nandy, deputy chief executive, and Brenda Hancock, principal in charge of consumer affairs. At least two members of the current team are likely to leave in the next six months.

This phenomenal rate of turnover has not been confined to the highest level of staff. At least 12 have quit who were employed in senior and higher executive grades. When I visited the Commission last week (on the first visit by British journalists allowed for well over a year), I found only one senior member of the legal department actually at work: another was on prolonged sick leave and there were two vacancies. The education department had three vacancies in its senior team of five; and the employment section was nine short of its full staffing complement of 32. Taking all staff together, the turnover this year has been 38 per cent, more than three times that of an average office.

WHEN THE EOC was first set up, a number of staff were seconded from the civil service and some have returned, without rancour, to their old jobs. But that explains only a small proportion of departures. Others have made no secret of the fact that they found it difficult or impossible to translate policy into practice because of obstacles put in their way by Commissioners. In an open letter of resignation on 7 November, one higher executive officer said her decision was due to 'a total disillusionment with the lack of direction and commitment to decisive action by EOC Commissioners in all areas of the EOC's work. In my view this continual failure to support the work of the staff over the past two years has led to frustration and low morale amongst staff . . . and has led me personally to the conclusion that I will only be able to work effectively for the cause of equal opportunities *outside* employment with the Commission.'

Hers was not an isolated outburst. Staff have been voicing similar feelings for more than two years. Late in 1976, a senior member of the employment section wrote a memo explaining her reasons for leaving: 'The frustration arose from the lack of policy decisions. In this area I feel the weakness lies with the Commissioners. They regard themselves as delegates, but I feel they should be individuals, looking objectively at the legislation and determining policy . . .'

For a long period last year, staff were in a state of near mutiny, spending up to two afternoons a week in union meetings. This followed the sacking of Eileen Byrne, but had less to do with her performance in office than with the tactless, autocratic way she was fired. As one former employee says: 'There was such an atmosphere of dissent and crisis that virtually no work was done'. An Internal Management Review was held by a joint team of Commissioners and union representatives; and in a style typical of one of Britain's more paranoid organisations, the results were swiftly shredded and never made known to the rest of the staff – who are still guessing.

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Sex Discrimination Act 1975

1975 CHAPTER 65

An Act to render unlawful certain kinds of sex discrimination and discrimination on the ground of marriage, and establish a Commission with the function of working towards the elimination of such discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity between men and women generally; and for related purposes.
[12th November 1975]

MATTERS CAME TO A HEAD in June this year when the Commissioners, unsuspecting, invited senior staff (Principal Officer level and above) to one of their working weekends at a hotel in the Yorkshire village of Bramhope. There was good food and wine and an agenda drawn up by the chairman, the Baroness Lockwood, which began with a review (by the chairman) of the last two years' work, went on to discuss future work and ended with a session on formal investigation into sex discrimination. Just as the Baroness was beginning her review, she was interrupted by Dipak Nandy who, on behalf of the whole team of top executives, issued an ultimatum: change the agenda to discuss their grievances or they would all pack up and go home. Their chief complaint was of interference by the Commissioners and in particular by the chairman and her deputy, Lady Elspeth Howe, with the executive function of senior staff. 'We wanted to register our disgust at having to spend a weekend talking about things like "the balance between enforcement and persuasion",' explained one principal officer who has since left, 'when in reality we couldn't do *any* damn thing!'

The agenda was abandoned and the weekend given over to a series of meetings and negotiations of which the last session began at 2 am on Monday morning. The staff were informed that their ladyships Lockwood and Howe were not going to resign, but that the chief executive would be replaced as soon as possible. (David Dolton, who had already given notice and was absent due to illness, was an obvious scapegoat.) A veteran civil service chief, Eric Wright, was brought out of retirement three weeks later to do the job on a temporary, part-time basis. Interviews for a permanent replacement are to be held this month. But a former EOC employee has commented: 'The staff made it clear at the time – and I still believe it – that you can't solve the problem by bringing in Superman as chief executive.'

One positive result of the Bramhope weekend was the emergence of a relatively progressive group within the Commission itself: individuals who sympathised with some of the staff's grievances and shared their frustration, wishing the EOC could take a more dynamic approach to its work.

THE DIFFICULTIES which have beset the EOC were, to a great extent, built into it from the start. The Home Office set it up in a frantic rush in 1975. Pressure from women had mounted to quite a pitch, and a deadline had to be met on 29 December when the Sex Discrimination Act came into force. It was a time of considerable optimism (at *last* a law which gave official recognition to a problem that had existed for centuries!) and the government was picking up a lot of credit; not only had it shepherded the law through Parliament, but it was also setting up the Equal Opportunities Commission, a body which seemed to herald a new era in women's rights. That, at least, was the impression given to the public. The nuts and bolts of the exercise held a different meaning.

The EOC was set up according to the same unwritten rules by which most Commissions and 'quangos' are established. These rules are designed first and foremost to satisfy the interest groups which carry most weight with the government, and only secondly to enable the organisation to exercise its statutory duties and powers. Thus, the Labour Party's Women's Officer became chairman and a Tory Shadow Minister's wife became deputy chairman – which may have kept the two parties happy but may not have been the best recipe for a strong, united leadership. (A Swedish journalist who interviewed the deputy chairman last summer was astounded to hear the good lady say that she didn't 'really believe in equality'.) There was a battle over whether the TUC and CBI should have two or three places on the Commission. In the end they won three each, making an 'industrial block' which could outweigh other alliances or interest groups. The Education establishment had to be satisfied next, then Scotland, Wales and finally the Home Office itself. The notion that the Commission might be filled by individuals most noted for their enthusiasm and ability to work for equality was not entertained. It was intended to be (and still is, with some notable exceptions) a disunited group of 'the Great and the Good', with prior and sometimes conflicting allegiances, approaching their statutory task of 'promoting equal opportunity' with a passionate caution. 'We don't work *together* as a Commission', one member said rather sadly.

WHEN ADVERTISEMENTS went out for staff to fill the Manchester office, they appeared to present ideal opportunities for energetic young women with university degrees and a high level of commitment to the work in hand. The mix proved disastrous. 'There are too many people who are committed to the women's cause, so they can't think straight', a Commissioner complained to me recently, 'they just go barging through.'

The fact that the chairman and deputy are full-time appointments has not helped, since it has led to an uneasy division of labour between themselves and senior officers in charge of the executive. 'The Ladies' (as they are known) are in the offices day in, day out: the temptation to get involved with the details of implementing policy may sometimes be irresistible. Some commissioners, too, have found the arrangement an awkward one: 'There are slight feelings,' said one 'that things might have been better

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if they were not full-time.'

Predictably enough, it is in areas which are least sensitive politically that the Commission has made most progress. There are no major disagreements between the political parties, or between the TUC and CBI, or between feminists and non-feminists, as to whether job advertisements should have a non-discriminatory form, or whether credit companies and building societies should treat women as favourably as men. Brenda Hancock's section, which deals with discrimination in the 'provision of goods, facilities and services', has a fairly uncontroversial record of achievement. Even there, however, there has been a marked reluctance (common to all departments) to *enforce* the Sex Discrimination Act.

THE COMMISSION HAS POWER not only to take legal action in courts and tribunals on behalf of individuals, but also to carry out formal investigations into areas where discrimination is suspected and to issue non-discrimination notices, backed up by court injunctions.

This year it has taken only three cases to court under the 'goods, facilities and services' section of the Act. It has carried out no formal investigations and issued no non-discrimination notices in this area. Fear of failure has been a major deterrent. The law is certainly weak and cumbersome, but a different kind of EOC might have tried to flex its muscles and then, if it failed, campaigned ferociously for amendements to the law.

El Vino, the Fleet Street wine bar, gives its male customers a choice of sitting down or standing up while they drink, but gives its female customers no choice at all: they have to sit. The EOC financed a case against El Vino this year, but when it was lost in the county court, refused to back it any further. The EOC was afraid an appeal might fail, although lawyers acting for the complainant, Sheila Gray, believe they have a case worth arguing. Meanwhile, El Vino and other bars continue to thumb their noses at women who feel the lack of choice to sit or stand amounts to 'less favourable treatment'.

IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT, the EOC has backed more than 80 individual complaints to industrial tribunals, 28 to the Appeals Tribunal, nine to the Court of Appeal and two to the House of Lords. Individual cases are useful in establishing the meaning of the law, but unfortunately they don't make much impact on the general patterns of employment which leave women in lower-paid jobs with fewer opportunities for training and promotion. To tackle this kind of problem, the Sex Discrimination Act has given the EOC power to conduct formal investigations both into specific cases (such as a single company or education authority), and also into broader areas (such as machine tool engineering or a region of the country). In three years, the EOC has conducted just *two* formal investigations: one into the Tameside education authority, which came off as a damp squib, failing to find unlawful discrimination; and one into Electrolux, the Swedish-owned domestic appliance firm, based at Luton.

It is doubtful whether the EOC would have embarked on the Electrolux inquiry, had not Mr Justice Phillips, then chairman of the Employment Appeals Tribunal, suggested that it did so, after more than 100 women had filed equal pay claims against the company at their local tribunal. In February 1977 the Commission announced the investigation would take about four months. Last week, 20 months later, I was told to expect an interim report, dealing with equal pay at the company, in about two or three months. Another report on sex discrimination at Electrolux would appear later, but when . . . well, my guess was as good as any. Female employees at the company are still waiting for equal pay. The Commission has adopted a Fort Knox defence against journalists who inquire about Electrolux and will not even divulge their methods of investigation.

CHALLENGED ON THEIR FAILURE to carry out more than two formal investigations, the chairman and deputy chairman complain that the legal procedure is slow and complicated. 'We now know that each formal investigation will take a minimum of about seven to eight months and will involve the equivalent of two members of staff full-time', says the Baroness Lockwood. (Staff who otherwise leave because they are disappointed in the Commission's failure to enforce the law might usefully be employed in this capacity.) I was told last week that the Commission hadn't the resources to carry out more than five investigations a year. Fair enough – but after three years, where are the other 13? If the EOC *practised* more often, it might get better at doing formal investigations. The Commission for Racial Equality, a quango with similar powers and plenty of problems of its own, has managed to launch more than a dozen formal investigations since it was set up last year; and last week it issued its first non-discrimination notice.

With three CBI and three TUC representatives on the Commission, and a strong-willed Tory deputy chairman, it is not surprising that efforts to eliminate discrimination in employment have been restricted mainly to individual casework. Anything more radical would be bound to get caught in political cross-fire. A booklet has been published setting out guidelines for employers but only after 17 different drafts had passed back and forth between staff and Commissioners.

The result of an investigation (not a formal one) of 500 leading employers is due to be published shortly. This project was launched in November 1976 and comprised a questionnaire to management which yielded 441 replies, and visits by Commissioners and staff to 43 establishments. The aim was to 'provide a general background of current attitudes and practices in industry'. It was not intended as a 'hard statistical survey', but one might have been forgiven for expecting some interesting data. The report includes quite a punchy 'Checklist for Action' which calls for better opportunities for part-timers and positive action to overcome job segregation and poor promotion prospects for women. But the information gathered after such a long period of investigation is threadbare and bland. The section on 'Findings' runs to eight and a half pages of triple-spaced typescript and contains such nuggets as this on equal pay:

> The survey shows that equal pay has been implemented by a variety of methods. National Joint Industrial Councils influenced some employers when the Equal Pay Act was introduced, as in the Motor Vehicle and Repair Industry. Others were influenced by their appropriate Federations' recommendations and suggestions. There was an agreement within the Chemical and Allied

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Comparative figures to 31st March	1976 £000s	1977 £000s	**1978 £000s**
Turnover	931,380	1,087,557	**1,240,867**
Group profit before taxation	98,349	112,292	**128,102**
Taxation (including deferred tax)	50,060	57,784	**65,028**
Cash flow	42,919	46,195	**55,277**
Net current assets	311,206	363,157	**395,084**
Ordinary stockholders funds	379,476	424,051	**464,700***

**Excluding surplus of £75m. on informal valuation of UK properties, provisions for deferred profit £99m. and for deferred tax £55m.*

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Left to right: Commissioners Eric Robinson, Principal of Bradford College; Anne Mackie, Assistant Industrial Relations Officer at Unilever; Ethel Chipchase, Secretary of the TUC Women's Advisory Committee; Marie Patterson, TGWU National Women's Officer.

> industries to move towards introducing equal pay four years prior to the effective date of the Equal Pay Act. Central Arbitration Committee Awards were made in respect of at least four employers we contacted.

TO BE FAIR, the EOC has produced some useful publications. The latest, on child care, *I want to work but what about the kids?* is one of the best, but it had a long and painful gestation period. Work began in May 1977 but the staff who prepared the original draft ran into trouble with Commissioners – and in particular with Lady Howe. There were disagreements over terminology: Lady Howe found the phrase 'collective child care' distasteful and insisted that it be altered to 'group child care'. But the main political battle was over who should pay for the facilities – parents or the state. Lady Howe took the view, in line with her party, that parents should pay, but she met considerable opposition from staff and other Commissioners, and in the end it was decided that the EOC should not come down on one side or the other. After 17 months of wrangling and rewriting, the document was finally released in October this year. It skirts delicately around the question of finance. Just as it was rolling off the presses, the deputy chairman felt free to disregard the agreed policy and announce on 26 September that 'a proportion, if not all of the cost (of child care) will have to be borne by families themselves'.

Incidents like these contribute to a general tendency to dilute policy, to delay action and to appear to be doing one thing while really doing another. It is not just the result of poor management or of an unhappy combination of personalities: it is an almost inevitable outcome of the unwritten rules by which quangos are constituted.

IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION the Commission's record is most dismal of all. This part of the law is certainly more difficult to enforce: complainants must first appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and, if that brings no change after two months, face the long delays and intimidating formalities of an action in the county court. Sex discrimination in schools can take subtle and insidious forms: it is hard to pin down in legal terms. Parents and children are normally reluctant to single themselves out as 'trouble makers' and many are far too much in awe of teachers to contemplate sueing them.

The trouble is, the Sex Discrimination Act (or any law which covers new ground, for that matter) means very little until it *has* been tested in court. As yet there has been not one single case of alleged discrimination in education. Efforts have been made to *persuade* the educational establishment to change its ways, but the law has lain rusting in a corner, devoid of meaning. Schools and education authorities are still getting away with murder. A random survey of secondary school classes in woodwork, metal work, advanced maths or physics would show how little had changed since 1975; and the majority of primary schools still use reading schemes such as *Janet and John* and Ladybird's *Peter and Jane* which reinforce traditional sex roles. The real offender is the Department of Education and Science. But who would expect a congenitally timid and internally divided quasi-government organisation to find the will or the nerve to challenge it?

AS THE AUTUMN TERM of 1977 began, the EOC received a request for legal assistance from a parent in Surrey, which gave it the first real chance to take an education test case to court. A 12-year-old girl at a co-educational Junior High School had wanted to follow a course in Craft and Design with the boys, instead of doing Needlework and Home Economics with the girls. She had first asked to do so in November 1976, but the school refused.

The girl's mother was a particularly determined individual and both made it clear they would put up a fight. In September 1977 the school informed them that a boy had dropped out of the course and invited the girl to fill the vacancy. At that point, however, her reluctance to be picked out as an exception and placed alone in a class of boys outweighed her desire to learn woodwork. She turned the offer down. She and her mother maintain that expecting a girl to *opt in* to a course which boys do automatically is still 'less favourable treatment' under the terms of the Sex Discrimination Act. The local education authority says it has insufficient resources to offer Craft and Design to both sexes on equal terms.

The EOC's Assistance and Monitoring Committee considered the case on 24 October 1977 and decided to support it. The girl's mother was informed that the Commission believed it to be an important test case which would receive a great deal of publicity and be watched closely by the educational world. The Commission's 1977 Annual Report refers to the case and comments that access of girls to woodwork and metal work is

> a matter of considerable concern to the Commission in view of the low representation of girls and women in technical apprenticeships and fields of employment. It is hoped that the Test Case will provide a definite ruling and point the way to widespread changes in timetabling practice.

THE OFFICER WHO DEALT with the case at the EOC was Valerie Hale, who had become acting principal in charge of education in the wake of Eileen Byrne. Ms Hale was a keen protagonist of the view that the Commission should use its enforcement powers, and it was after preparatory work done by her and by Jennifer Corcoran, the senior legal officer, that the Commission agreed to take up the case. By October 1978, when all the preliminary work for the case had been done and a hearing date was awaited, both Ms Hale and Ms Corcoran had left the EOC's employment. On the Monday following the Friday of Ms Hale's departure, the Assistance and Monitoring Committee, under the chairmanship of Lady Howe, decided to withdraw financial assistance. So far, reasons have been withheld. An important factor was clearly the fear of losing in court, yet what the EOC knew about the case had not altered substantially since October 1977. Quite a number of Commissioners as well as staff were incensed by the decision.

In backing out, the EOC may have trodden into a legal minefield. Solicitors acting for the girl and her mother have been given leave to apply to the High Court for a judicial review of this decision to withdraw funds without giving reasons.

IN OCTOBER THIS YEAR the contracts of the chairman and deputy chairman expired and the Home Office renewed them for another two years. An election seemed imminent then, and it might have embarrassed the government to do otherwise. One cannot really blame 'the Ladies' for the failings of the EOC: they have done no less and no more than they were intended to do. The fault lies mainly with the structure of the beast. Conceived with one purpose in mind, the EOC was designed for quite another – to *contain* the problem of sex discrimination, not *solve* it. It is unrepresentative and unaccountable. MPs would find it easier to keep an eye on the work of the Home Office than of the EOC. Its quasi-independence from government is supposed to make it more effective. Instead, its relationship makes it behave like a poor cousin on an annual visit to the Big House: dull, over-dignified, obsequious and desperately afraid of missing the next handout.

The Tories have said they'd like to cut it off without a penny, or at least axe its staffing complement from 170 to a 'handful'. But even the angriest critics among EOC employees (past and present), Commissioners and observers in the women's movement, disagree with that idea. They would rather talk about changing it and making it more accountable. One idea is for a Parliamentary Select Committee to hold a watching brief for the EOC. It could get better, they argue. It couldn't get much worse.

Can a quango be reformed? Can a swindle on such a scale be rectified? Certainly not while it remains corrupt. And corrupt the EOC will stay until the secret arrangements by which it operates, to serve the interests of those in power, not of women, are disclosed to the citizenry as a whole.

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MURRAY SAYLE on Anglo-Japanese relations

'I am often addressed as "Lord Foreigner", and I try to reply with the same courtesy'

PEOPLE who live on islands tend to be insular in their outlook. Following the OED, we expect them to be 'self-contained: narrow or prejudiced in feelings, ideas or manners.' What's more, as a general rule, they don't give a damn who knows it.

But some islanders, apparently, do. Recently the inhabitants of the group lying off the eastern end of the Euro-Asian land mass paused in their work long enough to express resentment at the term, or abbreviation, 'Jap', as used in a newspaper published on the corresponding island group off the western end. Or, as the *Asahi Evening News* put it 'JAP' OFFENSIVE – DISPUTE GOES ON.

The *contretemps* began with the imperious headline, 'BUY MORE BRITISH MAKES, JAPS' which appeared over a story about aircraft sales in the Brighton *Evening Argus*. A non-Japanese reader took the *Argus* to the Press Council, where the paper argued that 'Jap' was simply a headline-writer's shorthand not intended to hurt or annoy. Shigeraro Baksmoto, counsellor at the Japanese Embassy in London, testified that he did not find 'Jap' to be a friendly term, to say the least. Just the same, the Press Council upheld the *Argus*: JAPS' FLAP RAPPED, as we might headline the verdict, Press Council approving. This ruling has not, however, been accepted quite so readily in Tokyo. 'Even if the Press Council of Britain says that 'Jap' is merely an abbreviation, it does not sit well with us,' said the *Asahi Evening News*, quoting an American slang dictionary to the affect that 'Jap' seems to be tied in with things like surprise attacks and dirty business tricks. 'We feel that irritation at Japan's export offensive is hidden in the word.' In the first seven months of this year, Japan's trade with Britain shows a surplus of £420 million – far ahead of last year's, despite Japanese undertakings to the contrary.

The *Japan Times* found British arrogance was at the root of the problems. The use of term 'Jap', says the paper, 'may be merely in character with the British trait discernible in economics.' As perceived here, the attitude is that of 'we make what we want to, and you buy it.' Such a trait was perhaps nurtured over the centuries of British imperialism, during which Britain prospered by making the inhabitants of its colonies gratefully accept what it manufactured.

THE JAPANESE themselves, who may be the world's most insular people, have their share of islanders' prejudices. Chinese are called 'Chankore' ('Chinks') to distinguish them from 'Keto' (hairy Chinese), the old-fashioned Japanese term for Europeans. Americans get 'Ameko' behind their backs, and sometimes to their faces, a contemptuous term modelled on 'poriko', the Japanese for 'copper'. Koreans are regarded with particular loathing, for reasons you have to be Japanese to understand. All foreigners are called 'paijin', ('outside person'), a term which (because it is a contraction) some claim to be offensive. I am often addressed as 'Gaijin-Sama', 'Lord Foreigner', generally by salesmen, and I try to reply with the same courtesy.

But these terms would never be printed in a Japanese newspaper, and the British are not singled out for any particular disparagement; there is not even an equivalent for 'Ameko'. The real venom, is, let us be honest, on the other side. 'The feelings of the British people towards Japan are not very favourable,' says the *Asahi Evening News*, manfully grasping the nettle. A poll run by the same paper showed Britain the easy winner in the number of people who rated Japanese as 'imitators', 'isolationist' and 'cruel', and opined that 'Japan cannot be trusted as an ally'. There is, significantly, no equivalent of 'Jap' in any other European language.

'I am very fond of the Jap,' wrote Rudyard Kipling on his enthusiastic tour of 1889. 'Japan is a soothing place for a small man.' He especially liked the diminutive Japanese soldiers in their toy uniforms: 'Under British officers,' he wrote, 'they should be as good as any troops recruited east of Suez.' The only thing that disturbed Kipling was Japanese industrial progress: Japanese ironmakers, he thought, were 'bad little men who know too much.'

This did not, however, stop the recognition of common interests which led to the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1905, signed after the British-trained Japanese Navy in British-built ships destroyed the Russian fleet in the Tsushima Strait. The common interest was, then as now, to dish the Russians, held to be the principal enemy of mankind. But even before then Britain was Japan's firmest foreign friend and most admired model. The first Japanese railways, blast furnaces and even newspapers were all started by British technicians, and today's sober-suited, whisky-drinking, golf-playing Japanese businessman is a living reminder of those happy days.

Americans, Australians and Canadians were unhappy about Britain's new Oriental friend. 'No one can trust these slant-eyed devils whose vices can only be hinted at,' said the Australian politician Billy Hughes. After the first World War British liberals and jingoes alike pushed on with the Japanese romance. Britain insisted that her ally should have the former German concession in Shantung, in China, seized during the war; that Japan should have a permanent seat on the Council of the League of Nations; that Japan should have a League mandate over the former German islands in the Pacific, later the stepping-stones for Japan's spectacular advance after Pearl Harbour. They will only fortify them, said Billy Hughes. They did.

Things cooled a bit in the 1930s: the treaty lapsed, there were bitter protests from Lancashire about Japanese competition. But the one-way flow of technology continued: in 1934 Herbert Smith of the Sopwith Aviation Co., designer of the famous Camel, joined Mitsubishi to lead the design group on the ASIA, the forerunner of the even more famous Zeroes which helped sink the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* in the Gulf of Siam in 1942.

Even after Japan's fast learners had pricked the British military bubble in the Far East, there were still faint echoes of the old sweet music: in the early 1950s a design team from the Austin Motor Co. (remember Austins?) came out to Japan to set up an assembly line for an obscure firm named Toyota which planned, in a modest way, to go into the automobile business. On the escalator of history Japan, coming up, seems to have passed Britain, going down, some time in the late 1960s. In 1970 Japanese car production was twice Britain's; British GNP per head was passed in 1973, and the zooming yen has widened the gap: £2,192 per head (Britain), £2,452 (Japan).

SO ONCE again it has fallen on Japan to expose British weakness. The British response on the industrial front has been oddly like the military one: starting off with lunatic under-estimation and running through the emotions to petrified fright, as typified by the frantic appeals from Birmingham car men to halt the tide of Japanese imports, and the simultaneous appearance in Tokyo recently of a group of 30 British car dealers (accompanied by Tory MP David Walder) to plead with the Japanese for more Nissans, as the only way to save their businesses from the West German onslaught.

But the British, as people, are well liked and respected in Japan, and there are even signs of gratitude for past favours. That there are many points of similarity between the reserved inhabitants of the two sets of rainy, Royalist, tea-drinking islands does not pass unobserved by Japanese, either. The British are regularly in the first three or four of the foreign nationalities Japanese say they are prepared to marry, although more than half of Japanese girls in their twenties state that they would absolutely not consider marrying any kind of foreigner, so there is no call for panic in the introduction bureaux of the West.

British/Japanese relations could stand a lot of improvement, which essentially means modernisation, on both sides. Nothing can be built on memories of the cosy old imperial relationship, still vividly recalled by the British Embassy, an immense out-cast compound directly opposite the other Tokyo symbol of reserved impotence, the Royal Palace. Visitors to the Embassy are greeted by sandalled servants wearing *hakama*, the obsolete Japanese men's dress (even the Emperor doesn't own one) while, in a prefab in the Embassy grounds, the Trade men toil on in *unfolklorique* shirtsleeves, continually let down by the non-arrival from home of the stuff they are supposed to sell. This way there can only lie an economic Singapore, panic in the City, and the invisible trade barriers all pointing the wrong way.

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London Diary

☐ Monday afternoon. I have a furious argument with Willis Hall, the playwright. He has been gathering support for a defection from the Anti-Nazi League of some of its original sponsors. He says that the reason for this is the current issue of *SKAN* (School Kids Against the Nazis). He says the issue (which was published two and a half months ago) is 'violent from start to finish'. I say, rubbish. There is one rather silly violent poem and a handful of undeleted expletives. All the rest is news and views, sharply but seriously expressed, of young people resisting racialism and fascism. But anyway, I say, if Willis Hall or anyone else objects to any ANL publication (and there are hundreds) surely the thing to do is to protest to the steering committee, and try to get things changed. None of the defectors from the League have done that. Why do they just charge out like offended prima donnas? Willis Hall says he wants to 'teach the Anti-Nazi League a lesson'. I ask what alternative organisation against racialism and fascism he recommends. He says none. I say that the only people who will rejoice at his behaviour are the National Front. Who is joining Hall in this swipe at the ANL? Michael Parkinson, for one. That isn't so surprising since anyone who watches his Saturday night public relations show can see for themselves that Parky has a political spine of which any self-respecting jellyfish would be ashamed. Lord (Ted) Willis, for another. Willis boasts to his friends that he had an arm broken by fascists at Sir Oswald Mosley's rally at Olympia in 1931. Willis also supported the resistance to Mosley at Cable Street in 1936, when more violence was used by anti-Fascists than anything the Anti-Nazi League has ever dreamed of.

☐ Ecstasy engulfed the House of Commons last week at the news that Cledwyn Hughes, a Welsh Labour MP, had been appointed 'special envoy' to find a solution to the Rhodesian 'problem'. Margaret Thatcher was beside herself with joy. James Callaghan said he'd got the idea from the Tories. The whole place oozed with self-congratulation and bi-partisan flattery. No-one was sick. This was all very proper, for Cledwyn Hughes, on any rating, is one of the outstanding timeservers of postwar British politics. There is absolutely no record of him ever standing up for anything against anyone. One flash of him on television while Minister of Agriculture in the late 1960s showed him at his best. In a crowded hall, a throng of angry farmers bawled at him for higher food prices. Three times Hughes gibbered that his government was creating an 'export-led boom which will put this country straight' before hurrying off the stage. If he had any convictions, he would not have the courage of them.

Hughes has done at least one good turn for the chief of the Rhodesian sanctions-busters, Shell. In 1972, he piloted through all its stages in the House of Commons a private Bill which allowed Shell to build a single buoy mooring for off-loading oil from tankers off the coast of Cledwyn Hughes's Anglesey constituency. One of the objections was that oil might be spilled into the sea. Shell told a House of Lords inquiry that there had been only three spillages at its South African mooring. When the figures were finally produced, they showed 27 spillages. No such spillage, Shell promised, would take place at Anglesey. I gather, however, that this has gone the way of most Shell promises. Only last month, there was a mighty spillage of a hundred tons of oil (more than in all those 27 South African spillages put together). Shell immediately put out a statement that the oil had been lost at sea. The next day, the lost oil turned up in huge quantities in the Conway estuary, causing havoc to one of the two main wintering grounds of the great-crested glebe. If you want to know what a great-crested glebe is, you can look it up in the beautifully illustrated *Shell Guide to British Wildlife*. And if you think the single buoy mooring marks the biggest fiasco of Cledwyn Hughes's political career, you should at least wait until he returns from Rhodesia.

☐ The power of the NEW STATESMAN knows no bounds. When I last wrote this diary I appealed for a first edition of Olive Schreiner's *Trooper Peter Halket of Mahsonaland*. I have it now, thanks to a school teacher in Hertfordshire. I also have a letter from a Statesman reader in Brussels, saying she is happy to leave the book for me at her house. Thanks. Thanks too to Marion Friedman, who sends me a modern edition of the book, published by Wildwood in 1974. Her introduction explains the history of the awesome photograph of racialist lynchings by Rhodes's army, which is reproduced in her edition for the first time since 1897.

In all, I had *twelve* letters about the book, which shows, I hope, that there's a bit of an Olive Schreiner revival going on. Nothing could be better.

☐ Somewhere in Cornish folklore there is the following jingle:

Oft have I heard of Lydford law.
At morn they hang the men and draw,
And sit in judgment after.

That system of jurisprudence obviously commends itself to the Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees. When Astrid Proll was arrested on 15 September on suspicion of crimes alleged to have been committed in Germany the rules about extradition to that country were quite clear. The 1960 extradition treaty between Britain and Germany said: 'No British subject shall be delivered up to the Federal Republic of Germany.' Astrid is married to a British subject and so has an automatic right to British citizenship. On 25 September the German government wrote anxiously about this to the British government. On 29 September the treaty was amended by royal decree at Balmoral Castle to read: 'The Government of the UK *shall not be obliged* to extradite a citizen of the United Kingdom.' But it can if it wants to. The order was laid before Parliament when it wasn't sitting on 2 October and came into effect the next day. Thus democratically are the rights of British citizens retrospectively gambled away in the casino of European power politics.

☐ I salute Peregrine Cust, last week's winner of the Keith Joseph Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Mr Cust is living proof of the Joseph view that wealth is generated by individual enterprise and initiative. Mr Cust has generated £3,452,185, and he is still only four years old! This is a tremendous example to millions of slothful workers all over the country who can't generate that much in twenty lifetimes. Rather like Sir Keith, Mr Cust was assisted in his wealth-generation by an ancestor who, in a sudden burst of initiative and enterprise, died, leaving all to his progeny. The ancestor in question, the late Lord Brownlow, generated *his* wealth in the same way, as did his father, and so on through six baronies and three baronetcies – all the way back to 1754.

For those who believe that the Labour Government is taxing our nobility out of existence, I submit the following figures, from Hansard of 9 June this year. They are for effective percentage rates of tax for estates where half is left to the spouse and half to a son as a business:

Value of Estate	March 1974	March 1978
£500,000	50.6%	10.6%
£1m	57.1%	12.8%
£2m	60.4%	14.5%

I think it's called a fundamental and irreversible shift of wealth from the rich to working people and their families.

Paul Foot

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Posters advertising jobs were removed yesterday from the windows of the Job Centre at Chichester, Sussex, because planners said they spoilt the look of the cathedral city. – *Daily Telegraph* (C. M. Lifetree)

☐ This is an unusual book for a solicitor to read. It explains the idea that wealth is produced by conversion of materials to a form in which they have a higher value. – *Law Society Gazette* (R. Lewis)

☐ The company running Britain's biggest toxic waste dump is claiming the right to pump more poisons into waste 'lagoons' at Pitsea, Essex, than existing licences allow. The firm says it has established users' rights because it has been exceeding the amount allowed for years. – *Guardian* (B. Munro)

☐ 5 room flat. Virtually no burglaries. No noises heard from neighbours (24-hour porters/receptionists, etc.). Good view of Royal processions. £175,000 or near offer. – Ad. In *The Times* (R. J. Sawers)

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1974 - 1978

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BATTLING MIKE FOOT (Westminster) v. CHRIS (MOSQUITO) HITCHENS (Gt Turnstile) – continued

Sir, Christopher Hitchens has got it wrong again, as usual, and on this occasion he has excelled even his own standard of calculated or careless distortion. Almost every sentence in the article he wrote about myself (NS 17 November) is either inaccurate or misleading or both, but to your readers his charges may appear to be bolstered by the claim that 'we wrote to Foot and asked him to speak privately on K.R.'s (K. R. Sundar Rajan, your Indian correspondent) behalf and that 'we received a reply from one of his underlings', which you then purported to quote.

In fact, I did raise privately with the Indian authorities, as your previous editor Anthony Howard had asked me to do, the case of K. R. Sundar Rajan, as, indeed, I raised the case of several others; in this instance, I fear, the representation had little effect. I did think it slightly odd, however, even from the NEW STATESMAN, that this private request for my intervention should have been accompanied by a public attack on me (based as it happens upon a false report for which your previous editor at least had the grace to apologise). This was the reason for the references in the reply from 'one of his underlings' which Hitchens quoted last week. However, Hitchens transformed the meaning of that letter by *the simple device of slicing it in half*, by just not printing the part which referred to the request about K. R. Sundar Rajan – without, of course, bothering to tell your readers what he was up to.

Even more contemptible, however, if possible, than Hitchens's customary manipulation of the evidence is his attempt to import prejudice by his wretched reference to 'one of his underlings'. The suggestion he attempts to purvey is that I had somehow treated the matter without proper concern and attention. However, once again the facts dismiss the smear. The simple reason why 'the underling' replied to Anthony Howard should not be beyond the Hitchens comprehension; it was because Anthony Howard had written a personal letter to 'the underling'. The individual concerned is Elizabeth Thomas, who previously worked for five years in the NEW STATESMAN office and who now works in my office as Political Adviser. All this must have been known to Hitchens when he sought to deceive your readers with his imbecile sneer.

As I mentioned earlier, there are the usual crop of further inaccuracies in this latest Hitchens piece, but I will not ask for more of your space to deal with them. With him there is only one safe rule: his peculiar combination of malice, conceit and slipshod journalism means that nothing he ever writes should be accepted as even approximately true until it can be checked elsewhere.

MICHAEL FOOT

House of Commons
London SW1

Christopher Hitchens replies: Even by his own standards, this is not one of Foot's best. First, the extract I quoted *did* refer to his 'representations' in so many words, and did amount to nearly half his original letter. Second, we never apologised for the original attack, which concerned the Cambridge speech. We did correct a confusion about the time and place of another meeting in London, where Foot was reported as having said substantially the same thing. But he never challenged us on a letter from the Chairman of the Cambridge Fabian Society which said that 'Michael Foot's remarks on India caused profound distaste, even disgust, among his audience.' The supply of Foot rejoinders dried up after that. Third, we wrote to Ms Thomas in the hope that she could speed the passage of the letter to the Lord President's desk. After a lapse of two weeks without reply we wrote again, and then received a letter which, as the extract shows, was written in the third person. It wasn't actually Ms Thomas's intercession that we requested – as the letter we wrote would show. Fourth, I can quite see why Foot hasn't space for the alleged other inaccuracies, since he devotes the greater part of his time to choice remarks about myself (who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?). Finally, Foot obviously thinks that he emerges with credit from the Indian emergency and I confess that my journalistic powers are indeed too feeble to deal with a mentality like that.

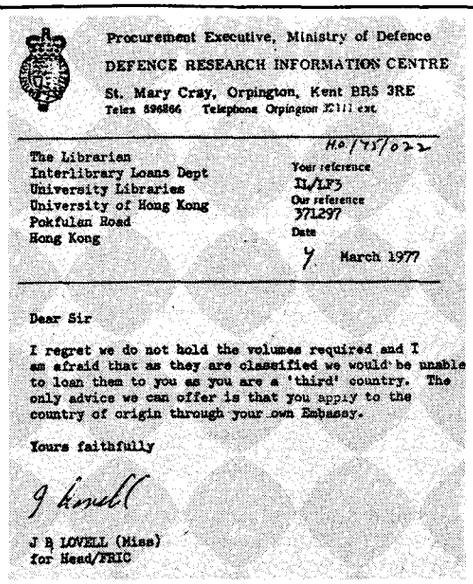
Goodbye to Hong Kong

From the Centre for Media Resources

Sir, Do I detect the secret hand of Chapman Pincher at work? Some correspondence arose last year between this University and a number of institutions throughout the world seeking the loan of George Chinn's *The Machine Gun* Vols 2-4 – a history of that weapon. Among the replies was one from the MOD Defence Research Information Centre – copy herewith. There appears to be some confusion in the ranks if the letter from the Ministry is to be believed.

Such information ('third' country, own Embassy, etc) is alarming news to Her Majesty's Loyal subjects in the Crown Colony of Hong Kong and it raises some pertinent questions. Is the Minister aware of his obligations? Does he know who he is supposed to be defending? Are the forces of the Crown stationed here a forgotten army? Is this the ultimate in defence cuts? Perhaps it is a subtle manifestation of some secret East-West diplomatic manoeuvring! Just where, may one ask, is 'our Embassy'? His Excellency the Governor of Hong Kong doubtless would wish to make the acquaintance of the Ambassador – is he none other than C. Pincher Esq?

Curiouser and curiouser; although the MOD do not have the books, we would not be allowed to have them if it did. However, in our plight, help comes from another mislaid colony. The Library of Congress, Washington USA, no less, very kindly advises us that, although it cannot send the books as they are too fragile, we can have microfilm of all three volumes.



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Dear Sir

I regret we do not hold the volumes required and I am afraid that as they are classified we would be unable to loan them to you as you are a 'third' country. The only advice we can offer is that you apply to the country of origin through your own Embassy.

Yours faithfully

J B LOVELL (Miss)
for Head/FRIC

PHILLIP A. COOKE
Director

Tanzania's road to socialism

Sir, Your issue of 13 October has only recently come to my notice. I am sorry that Mr Wintour was not convinced by my assurance that Tanzania has neither abandoned its goal of socialism, nor stopped its progress in that direction. That, however, is his privilege. What is not acceptable is for him to support his assessment by inadequately based innuendos and false statements.

Tanzania has very many problems; probably some of our own making. But by far the largest is the implications of the poverty Mr Wintour dismisses so airily. When the National Income per head is about £25 per annum as in 1961, or when it is approximately £90 per annum as now, even 20 per cent of GDP going on investment does not bring change in productive capacity. And that is to say nothing of the effect of illiteracy, bad health, and the lack of any public capital stock on the ability of the people to innovate.

A few facts may help. The annual GDP Growth Rate was an average of 4.4 per cent between 1961 and 1967; 4.6 per cent in the following decade – which does not indicate a 'decline of about 2 per

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cent since the Arusha Declaration'. Manufacturing productivity was virtually the same in 1976 as in 1967; that is no cause for pride, but neither is it a decline of 3 per cent per annum. The goal of self-sufficiency in food by 1980 still holds; we are already supplying all our needs in maize, sorghum millet, cassava and beans.

We have received much more foreign aid since 1967 (the year of the Arusha Declaration) than we did previously. But foreign aid does not meet 'two-thirds of our national budget'. Our recurrent budget has always been entirely from local taxation; except during the disaster years of 1974 and 1975 taxation has also made a contribution to the development budget.

The last point of incontrovertible fact; it is nonsense to say that 'last year' the aid consortium 'delayed the publication of Tanzania's third five-year plan'. That plan was due to be published in 1974; it was postponed for two years because of the combined effects of drought, oil prices and world inflation. It was published (in Swahili) in book form in 1977, although the strategy, targets and investment allocations had been known and applied by the relevant implementing authorities for a year.

But what of socialist policy? We did make many mistakes during villagisation, which we are gradually correcting, although where Mr Wintour gets the suggestion that 'many of the richest were spared' is beyond me. On the contrary it was those few people in the rural areas who had brick houses with tin roofs who were the greatest short-term sufferers from the policy – and not all have yet received the compensation they are due. But without villagisation the policy of universal primary education (which has been implemented between 1973 and 1977) could not have succeeded. As it is, well over 90 per cent of Tanzania's children of primary school age are attending a school – albeit still primitive and ill-equipped compared with what we would like.

It is true that experiments are being made with the introduction of worker-incentives in factories and state enterprises. Tanzania, like every other socialist and capitalist country, is trying to find the appropriate balance between material and non-material incentives for increased productivity. We have not solved the problem yet.

There are many points raised in the article I have not dealt with for reasons of space. But one thing is quite certain. We have not, and shall not, allow the growth of a rural class system; nor shall we reverse the trend towards equality in our post-tax wage differentials. Talk of a 'peasant kulak class' developing betrays an ignorance of what the Russian kulak was, as well as what Tanzania is and is becoming. Tanzania is trying to build socialism; we may sometimes stumble or even pause to consolidate. But we shall not give up. I hope we can say the same of British socialists.

JOAN E. WICKEN
Personal Assistant to the President
The State House
PO Box 9120
Dar Es Salaam

Transported

Sir, As a Victorian – i.e. native of Victoria, Australia – and an historian (Melbourne and Cambridge Universities in that order), I write to contradict Asa Briggs's remark in his review of George Rudé's *Protest and Punishment* (NS 24 November) that convicts were sent to Victoria. No convicts were ever transported to the state of Victoria, and any reviewer or author who states otherwise rules himself off my list of reading and out of court. I can only suppose it was carelessness on the part of the English reviewer. If Rudé had given the alleged industry, research, etc, to the subject he would not have made this error.

ROSS WILSON
51a Canfield Gardens
London NW6

War of words

Sir, John Keegan's review of John Terraine's book *To Win A War* (NS 17 November) does no credit either to your journal or to himself. Surely a serious author of known scholarship in a particular field has a right to expect from a periodical like the NEW STATESMAN a rational critique of his argument and documentation, even if the conclusions of the critique may be adverse. However, Keegan's review makes no attempt to summarise the historical case made by John Terraine in *To Win A War*, no attempt to criticise it on the basis of errors of facts or analysis, but instead simply pours bile over the author himself.

Yet Keegan's sad display illustrates the curious mental block of English intellectuals about the Great War, which leads them to shrink from tackling the realities of the dilemma facing the combatants and take refuge in emotionalising about the horrors of the battlefields and in the indictment of scapegoats. Given German war aims, even those of so-called 'moderates' in the Reichstag, given the position of outward success enjoyed by Germany until late in 1918 thanks to her initial occupation of Belgium and Northern France, was there ever a realistic chance that the war could have been ended by a compromise peace? And if not, by what technical military means available at the time could the war have been won more quickly and economically? Let us remember that the Second World War (in Europe) lasted two years longer than the Great War and cost immensely more in lives, civilian and military. The United Kingdom losses on the Western Front in 1914-18 of 500,000 dead compare with German and Russian losses on the Eastern Front in 1941-5 of over 1,300,000 and 6,000,000 respectively.

In his review Mr Keegan should have addressed himself to such hard questions rather than indulge an animus that seemed to verge on the personal.

CORRELLI BARNETT
Churchill College
Cambridge

Frogspeak

Sir, In spite of Arthur Marshall's awesome familiarity with Frogspeak, your readers should not be left under the impression that a Frenchman would say 'Qui pensent-ils qu'ils sont?' (NS 17 November), when all he means is 'Who do they think they are?' He will say 'Pour qui se prennent-ils?' or, more colloquially, 'Pour qui ç'qu'y s'prennent?'

ALBERT GÉRARD
Rou Louvreux 51/23
4000 Liege
Belgium

Sleeper stories

Sir, I am compiling an anthology of railway journeys in trains of all kinds (trans-continental, private, royal and presidential, prisoner of war and troop, branch line etc), both in fact and fiction. All suggestions gratefully received.

LUDOVIC KENNEDY
c/o Collins Publishers
14 St James Place
London SW1

Christmas under apartheid

Sir, May I again appeal to your readers to send seasonal greetings to the banned and banished and families of political prisoners and those who have died in detention in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). This Christmas we hope that there will be an even greater response to this appeal than in previous years. The number of families on our list has grown dramatically, and those who send seasonal greetings to these families help to sustain and encourage those who are unjustly persecuted by the apartheid regime.

Names and addresses can be obtained by writing to our office, if possible enclosing stamps to cover postage.

ABDUL S. MINTY
Anti-Apartheid Movement
89 Charlotte Street
London W1

About Oxford books

Death in Paris

'Cobb likes the past for its own sake, he feels at home in it, he knows practically everybody who lived in the 1790s. He is such a marvellous historian because of his unique and very personal relationship with his subject.' *Theodore Zeldin.*
Richard Cobb's new book, **Death in Paris 1795-1801** has just been published at £4.95. It is an evocation of the dead, those who committed suicide or died a sudden death, usually without any political connections, whose bodies were brought to the Basse Geôle de la Seine, the predecessor of the Paris morgue. From its archives, Professor Cobb has once again performed a feat of historical reconstruction, repeopling the narrow streets and densely occupied six-storey buildings of Paris, recreating the lives of the poor and downtrodden. Like all his other books, **Death in Paris** celebrates the variety and dignity of human life whatever its circumstances.

After Kilvert

On 1 January 1870 the Reverend Francis Kilvert, the curate of Clyro in the Wye Valley, began to keep the diary which has become a classic of English intimate writing and of the observation of nature and country social life. One hundred years later, A. L. Le Quesne, a schoolmaster who had read Kilvert's Diary and fallen under its spell, moved into the same house, where he too kept a diary. In **After Kilvert**, £5.95, Mr Le Quesne compared and contrasts the two diaries, throwing perceptive light on that young Victorian clergyman and on the changes in behaviour and attitudes that have taken place in Britain, particularly in the countryside, in the course of the past century.

Masefield's life

John Masefield is best known as a poet of the sea. In her new biography, the first full-length one, Constance Babington Smith suggests that he was as much a celebrant of the English countryside, devoted to the England of St George rather than that of John Bull. His reputation has been in the doldrums for too long: the new book – **John Masefield: A Life**, £6.50 – enables us to take a fresh look at a very good writer and an interesting man. Miss Babington Smith, has had the full support and co-operation of Masefield's family, and access to unpublished letters and papers; the result is a rounded and absorbing portrait of him.

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Long Ago and Far Away

I believe that I have touched lightly before on a shaming episode in my youth when, recklessly encouraged by an over-enthusiastic Oundle music master, I travelled to Caius College, Cambridge to attempt to win a choral scholarship and, when I began to sing, it was only pure politeness and consideration for the young that prevented the three adjudicators from instantly stuffing their fingers into their ears. It must, even then, have been a near thing. My voice was in tune, extremely loud and altogether horrible. It had a sort of brassy and defiant ring to it and I looked repulsive while doing it. I could have told them at school that I stood no chance but I kept mum for I had realised that the competition would at least mean a day and night away from Oundle and would give me a chance of inspecting Cambridge, whither I was, scholarshipless, soon to go. And so in due course, equipped with a signed exeat from the headmaster, copious instructions, journey money, sandwiches and a good-luck packet of voice pastilles from Matron, off I set.

To get by rail from Oundle to Cambridge in the good old days it was necessary to change trains a time or two and I found myself at one point on the deserted station platform of a smallish place called March in Cambridgeshire. It seemed rather isolated, miles from anywhere and but seldom frequented though a porter assured me that my onward train would come puffing into sight any moment. There was, conveniently, an unpretentious gentlemen's lavatory discreetly shielded by laurels and, hastening into it in order to freshen up for the next stage of my journey, I found myself face to face with, though I didn't realise it at the time, my very first specialised sexual graffito, fully visible and splendidly legible. 'Why don't we form a So Club,' an excited hand had scratched on the wall, 'and meet here on Thursdays?' I was later to discover that the word 'so' when applied to male sexual aberrations derived from the German *'Er ist so'* and was the equivalent of the then fashionable phrase 'He is one of those,' though I did not understand this nuance at the time. I merely wondered what the letters SO might stand for. Sanitary Orderlies? Security Officers? Station Operatives? But why on earth choose such a whiffy trysting place, and what was so special about Thursdays? And why was no time mentioned? Wouldn't they have to hang about (indeed) for hours? I was just seventeen and in those wholesome days it was possible to remain relatively innocent for quite some time.

On arrival in Cambridge I was made welcome and comfortably housed in Caius and, though I suppose I should have been gargling and 'resting my voice', I had accepted an invitation from an Oundle friend who had preceded me by a year and had kindly asked me to dine with him in Clare. He was an agreeable, worldly character who had always had more pocket money than the rest of us, had once been up in a private aeroplane (this, in the 1920s, was going it a bit), and had once asked me, during a holiday outing, to send a telegram to his home announcing that he would be late back. This method of communicating a perfectly ordinary message seemed to me to be tremendously dashing. Telegrams in my own home circle were productive of gasps and ashen faces and hands pressed to bosoms. One neither sent them nor was ever late back. So it was no surprise to find in my modish friend's rooms a very smart HMV red leather portable gramophone and the latest musical comedy records, a drinks table, copies of *The Bystander* and several photographs of girls, shingled and waved to within an inch of their lives. He was going, he said, the very next evening to London to 'do a show' with Mona. I asked, of course, what show. Well, Mona couldn't make up her mind between Gershwin's *Tip-Toes* at the Winter Garden or Jerome Kern's *Sunny* at the London Hippodrome. 'Which is it to be then?' I asked. 'I don't know yet,' he said, 'so I've bought tickets for both of them.' I was thunderstruck. 'But that means that whichever you go to, there will somewhere be two seats unoccupied.' 'Of course. What of it?' he said, vigorously shaking a white lady (for the benefit of younger readers, a white lady was one of the many contemporary cocktails).

I was appalled and terribly shocked at the wicked waste. As a matter of fact, I still am. And, innocent again, I assumed that every night in every London theatre every seat was occupied. What if the entrancing Dorothy Dickson, in the middle of dancing her heart out and singing Gershwin's tuneful 'That Certain Feeling', should peer into the stalls, spot the two deserted seats and consider herself virtually alone in the theatre? What if the supremely talented Binnie Hale, reaching for a high note in Kern's 'Who?' should look into the audience and see emptiness not fifteen feet away? But I do, in retrospect, sympathise with Mona's predicament. The decision between two such delightful possibilities must have been a difficult one. It is like the game, of which there are many variations, when you imagine yourself in a balloon that is losing height over dangerous and tiger-infested country. You are in distinguished company but whom do you expel from the basket, Dickens, Proust or Balzac (it's 'out goes Marcel' as far as I'm concerned)? Or on an over-crowded life-raft in Australian waters, whom do you feed to the sharks, Wagner, Beethoven or Mozart ('Sorry, Wolfgang, but there just isn't *room*')? I used to be in similar agonies of indecision over Gershwin, Cole Porter and Kern, but I am undecided no longer.

The American genius for writing light music (a skill that is now so seldom ours) is remarkable and baffling. There seems to be no rhyme or reason why the son of the Jewish President of the New York Street Sprinklers Association should have been able, in course of time and in 1903, to compose a number called 'How'd You Like To Spoon With Me?' Progressing from being a song-plugger in a music publishing company to being known as 'Dr Tinkle-Tinker', a sort of Mr Fixit of the keyboard, Jerome Kern became in addition an ardent Anglophile and married the daughter of the proprietor of the Swan Hotel at Walton-on-Thames. In next to no time, 30 Broadway shows had had the benefit of 100 Kern songs and Michael Freedland, conscientious author of the informative *Jerome Kern* (Robson Books, £4.95) lists many of them, 'Coo-Coo' and 'Call Me Flo' among them. And then one day he sat down and wrote 'They Didn't Believe Me', a song now associated in many minds with those last spine-chilling shots in the film of *Oh What a Lovely War*.

It is, happily, a success story every inch of the way (those who are interested in such matters will like to know that the tunes were written first, a variety of people later supplying the words). In 1917 there were seven new Kern shows on Broadway, with six more to come in 1918, for one of which there was a dark-haired rehearsal pianist whose name at birth was Jacob Gershvine but who now faced the world as George Gershwin. Some idea of the Kern royalties can be gained from his library which, collected over the years, was sold in the 1920s for just short of two million dollars. And there were *Show Boat* and countless other films and musicals still to come. There was also 'Smoke Gets In Your Eyes'.

And so, up in that balloon or down on that raft, I could never bring myself ('Goodbye, Cole') to expel or push anybody who, apart from everything else, had supplied two numbers called 'Look For The Silver Lining' and 'Long Ago and Far Away'. In those days, songs were, like cars, built to last.

Roger Woddis **Times Obituary**

He was never far away from death.
Many mourned him while he was alive;
Dissolution hung upon his breath,
Newness killed his struggle to survive.
Blinds were lowered on the thirtieth.
He was born in 1785.

Often fearless, faithful to his code,
Proudly British, grave as Big Ben's chimes,
Through the halls of history he strode,
Falling victim to the worst of crimes.
Gone the mighty god of Gray's Inn road,
Muted now the thunder of *The Times*.

No more leaders to reflect the age,
No more causes lost or battles won,
No more cuckoos on the letters page,
No more daily crosswords to be done.
Something lives: a residue of rage,
Adding to our grief. He leaves a *Sun*.

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CHRISTMAS BOOKS – 2

James Fenton

The Cloud of Knowing

On Difficulty by GEORGE STEINER *Oxford* £5.50
Heidegger by GEORGE STEINER *Fontana Books* £1.25

We do not yet know what Professor Steiner's next book will be 'about', but we may guess, on the basis of such texts as are available, that the aboutness will direct itself – will aim its most urgent responsions – towards some great zone of silence ('topic' would be too restricting a term, too banal and ungiving in its locality) about which we do not, as yet, 'know' anything at all.

You think I am mocking. Perhaps I am not. For such speculation is the favourite Steiner mode. It is true that knowledge and tradition have accumulated in this one mind to such an extent that the loss of that mind (one pictures for instance a number 11 bus, out of control, bearing down upon the Professor) would rank with the burning of the library at Alexandria. How remarkable, then, that everything Steiner knows must take its place alongside the enormous amount that he does not know. Or does not yet know. Some people would be satisfied with knowing so much. Steiner turns giddy – delightedly giddy – at the thought of knowing so little.

Some of this not-knowing is a matter of contingency. Slightly less than a third of Heidegger's work is available in definitive form, and the authoritative collected edition will not be ready until the 1990s. This seems both to dismay and to excite Steiner. Or again: we do not yet know whether sadistic literature encourages or sublimates sadism. Steiner is inclined to the belief that it encourages – and he has difficulty in dismissing the notion of censorship in this connection. But in both these examples, our ignorance will have its term. Steiner expects the answer to the psychological question in much the same way as he expects the collected edition.

There are other things that we have lost the opportunity of knowing. These form a curious group. Steiner reminds one, at times, of Sir Thomas Browne with his list of impossible curiosa. For instance, there is a remark in Ovid: 'I am ashamed to say I have also written a book in the Getic tongue.' Browne would dearly love to have that book. So too, I suspect, would Steiner. There are so many tantalising gaps in his library:

> We possess no history of noise-levels, of the decibels of word-volume in which different generations, societies and communities within the same societies have conducted their daily lives.

Finally there is a matter with which Steiner must live uneasily without an answer. This is the hermeneutic loop. Hermeneutics is defined as 'the disciplined understanding of understanding'. But how can understanding understand itself, without becoming involved in a logical circularity? Steiner believes it cannot, that such circularity is, however uncomfortable, an 'inevitable, perhaps necessary attribute of any discourse, of any articulate commentary whose object is itself "textual" '.

I suggest there is a certain glee in this discovery. If we could comfortably understand understanding, how dull life would be. Or if there were something mere about the fact of existence, how banal. When Heidegger, at the end of a lifetime of speculation, comes up with the blinding tautology, 'Being is Being', and suggests that the pursuit of being is a circular game, Steiner does not throw up his hands in scorn. The bleak pursuit of a tautology may well be worth while.

This love of the abyss, the appreciation of the unknowable, the conception of intellectual inquiry as a progress along a Moebius strip – how utterly unEnglish it is. What is the language of Steiner's thought? It is difficult to say – it seems to vary from moment to moment. And yet, if language and thought are, as Steiner believes, the same thing, it is a question worth asking. Steiner has said that his thought is trilingual. Is this possible? The language of his writing is English, and there is continual evidence, in vivid flashes, of a deeply learned appreciation of the history and nature of the tongue. But, beautiful and effective as it often is, Steiner's English does not feel like English. One might say, if the word did not have such dreadful connotations, that he writes in European.

It is this complexity of internal language which accounts not merely for the virtues but also for the faults of Steiner's writing. And there are faults, moments when the author is playing for histrionic effect. There are sentences which seem designed to meet the acoustical problems of some auditorium – they are not sentences for the page. And then there is a tendency to mask his meaning behind an unnecessary number of words. There are terms thrown in, casually, to give a little extra seasoning to what might otherwise seem a rather ordinary stew. I choose, from an excellent essay, the following remark on George Eliot:

> Between the urgent wealth of felt life and the actual idiom of the novel there is a zone of silence, an area of conventional selection in which the novelist's responses – material, psychologically informed, canny as are any of the moderns – are translated into the temperance and conventional indirection of Victorian public speech.

The basic meaning is not unclear, but Steiner is determined to make it as unclear as he safely can. 'Urgent', by the way, is a favourite seasoning-word. 'The wealth of urgently felt life' would have been more logical, but 'urgent wealth' is a surprising coupling, and is therefore preferred. 'Actual' appears to be used in the unEnglish sense of contemporary. 'Zones of silence', in my view, have become rather too common recently – 'silence' is in danger of becoming a cant term. Is 'material' an adjective? It seems so. What exactly is a material response? 'Informed' seems to be used in a special, or archaic sense. 'Canny' is a neat stroke – a moment of Anglo-Saxon ambiguity among the Latin ambiguities. 'Indirection' is really the last straw.

One fears to raise such objections. In just the same way as one would be afraid to raise one's hand in a Steiner lecture and admit that one had not read Lacan, and could the lecturer please explain a few key terms? For every effect is intended – it is part of the great strategy of rebuke. We are rebuked for our Englishness, our insularity of approach, our lack of reading, indeed our inability to read. (We do not yet, by the way, have a history of reading – this is another gap on Steiner's shelf.) I have been particularly struck, while reading these books in trains, planes, airport lounges, cafés and restaurants – generally, on the move – by Steiner's observation that the habit of reading in solitude and silence has more or less died out. One certainly needs that solitude and silence to appreciate these books to the full. One needs a library – not a university library, one's own library. Unfortunately, as Steiner also points out, personal libraries are a vanishing phenomenon.

It has reached the stage, Steiner argues, when reading itself will have to be taught. There is a conflict, he believes, between democratic values and education. American education is, indeed, no less than 'programmed amnesia'. How can we, belonging to a society in which education has more or less been defined as the opposite of learning by heart, appreciate writers from cultures in which learning by heart was the norm? And how can we read, say, Byron, without having read Byron's reading-list? But Byron's reading-list would take us back through the Italian epics to Dante. How can we read Dante, without having read Dante's reading-list? Dante's reading-list, as Steiner points out, does not include Homer, but it does include Virgil. How can we read Virgil, on the other hand, without having read Homer? At this point, one comes to a Steinerian brick wall. For how can one read Homer, when Homer had no reading-list? We simply do not have access to the materials which would give us the basis for a Steinerian 'reading' of Homer. To read him in this way, we would have to hear him. And that would be impossible.

Among this week's contributors:

JAMES FENTON's pamphlet of poems, *A Vacant Possession*, was published this year by the New Review.

DEREK MAHON teaches English at the New University of Ulster.

PAUL ADDISON is the author of *The Road to 1945*. He teaches history at the University of Edinburgh.

KINGSLEY AMIS is the author of *On Drink*. His latest novel is *Jake's Thing*.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON is Professor of French History at University College, London.

ANTHONY QUINTON is the President of Trinity College, Oxford. His most recent book, *The Politics of Imperfection*, has just appeared from Faber.

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ible if, as has been argued, 'Homer' did not exist.

I have satirised the position to a certain degree. It seems to me at times that Steiner wilfully involves us in a 'tortoise and hare'-style paradox, to humble us for our moral good. Steiner the guru seems determined all the time to remind us of what we do not know. He often forgets what we do know. Take Homer. A 19th-century educated English gentleman would know vast tracts of Homer by heart. I submit that, however much I stumble and turn to the dictionary, my reading of Homer is superior to his. For modern scholarship has taught me how oral poetry works, how and why a line is put together. It is impossible for me to equal the 19th-century reading in scope. However, it is also impossible for me to match it in ignorance.

Of the books under review, the essay on Heidegger is the more substantial, and contains among other things what seems to me a fair and discriminating account of the philosopher's relation to the Third Reich. The essays collected in *On Difficulty* have considerable areas of overlap, even when the ostensible subject matter is entirely different. This is not a drawback. It gives us a clear picture of Steiner's present obsessions, and enthusiasm, indeed, is a key quality in these writings. It is the quality which carries one along, even when the territory is unfamiliar. One cannot help but admire him deeply. Learning requires such enthusiasm. We do need Professor Steiner. We need him, as he himself might put it, urgently.

Derek Mahon

Lament for the Makar

The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid edited by Michael Grieve and William Aitken *Martin Brian & O'Keeffe* 2 Vols £15

'He will be remembered' were the words with which John Wain concluded his cravenly mean-minded MacDiarmid obituary in the *Observer* last summer. This grudging recognition, by a poet of little consequence, that MacDiarmid might be a poet of considerable consequence is typical of the orthodox attitude to the greatest Scottish poet since Burns – an uneasy condescension. Wain devoted most of his piece to sorrowful head-shakings over MacDiarmid's sanguinary Stalinism, if such it was, while seeming to concede that this psychopathic monster had once penned a handful of acceptable lyrics. One might equally say that W. B. Yeats was a demented Irish fascist who once wrote some nice poems about the Sligo countryside. Perhaps the hapless Wain *would* say that; I don't know. The fact remains that a certain kind of English literary stomach has always found MacDiarmid hard to take. He himself, of course, would not have wished it otherwise. There was nothing endearing about his Anglophobia. He meant every word of it, I'm afraid, and could be quite boring on the subject, as poets tend to become boring on their favourite subjects (Yeats on magic, Pound on economics). Still, England will survive his animosity, and Scotland will be the better for his love. It's the poetry that counts, and here it is, all 1,446 pages of it, plus glossary and indices, and cheap at the price.

In a negative way, I am well qualified to write about MacDiarmid, being neither a Scotsman nor an Englishman, ignorant both of Scottish linguistics and the natural sciences, and innocent of party politics. My approach, that is to say, is an empirical one. I read the poems, whether in English or in Scots (a perfectly straightforward task, despite their supposedly comic impenetrability) without preconception or polemical interference, and conclude that their author was a poet of the very first rank, comparable with Pasternak and Neruda, Eliot and Seferis. Like Neruda, he was capable of the most strident logorrhea; like Eliot, of the most astonishing doggerel. Yet these are characteristics common to many great poets, evidence of intellectual impatience.

There was a great deal of Whitman about MacDiarmid, both in his generous humanism and in his unabashed egotism; but he possessed a lyrical subtlety, even delicacy, that Whitman lacked, and he had the good fortune to be devoted to a tradition, or rather two traditions: the Gaelic tradition of *Ultima Scotia*, and the more urbane tradition of the later medieval Scots makars. Out of these, and the initially regenerative spirit of international Communism (his partisan crankiness was really a sentimental regression to those early days), he wove a critical and political fabric for his own poetry, which he called 'the seamless garment'. This phrase has curiously Marian overtones; and it is perhaps not too far-fetched to suggest that behind the broad man-in-the-street persona there was a romantic Jacobite struggling to get out. His frequent invocations of the Muse – a religious act, as Graves pointed out – and his interest in the literature of mysticism, seem to support this contention.

What distinguishes MacDiarmid as a poet, leaving aside all questions of nationality, is the immense range of his vision. I don't just mean that he produced many long poems enriched by all the cultures of Europe and the East, but that he had in a remarkable degree what one might call the theoptic view. From the beginning, as in 'The Bonnie Broukit Bairn', he had a lively sense of the planet Earth as one stone among many, albeit the most interesting because peopled by the peculiar creatures we call people. Or consider 'The Man in the Moon':

> The moonbeams kelter i' the lift
> An' Earth, the bare auld stane,
> Glitters beneath the seas o' Space,
> White as a mammoth's bane.

This cosmic sense, given local substance by geological study and a respectful attention to myth ('The Huntress and Her Dogs', which follows 'The Man in the Moon', recalls Ben Jonson's 'Hymn to Cynthia'), casts mankind as the principal actor in a universal drama. There is something of Dante about it; for, although 'the stars are but distant dirt', we hear in their apparently fortuitous motion a faint sidereal harmony. This music of the spheres is not, of course, the chamber music of polite society, but the *Coel Mor*, the Great Music of ancient Gaeldom:

> The cornet solo of our Gaelic islands
> Will sound out every now and again
> Through all eternity.
> I have heard it and am content for ever.

Few would deny that MacDiarmid was capable of great folly. There is the pretentiousness of the autodidact, which leads him to blind us with newly-acquired science and polysyllabic eyewash, as when he takes for an epigraph De Sanctis' opaque asseveration that 'a gulf divides the exaltations of the mystics from the tachypraxia of the micro-splanchnic hyperthyroidics or the ideo-affective dissociations of the schizothymes' – as if we didn't know. Then there was the unfortunate business of the perfect little poem 'Perfect', which was later shown to have been lifted almost word for word from a short story by Glyn Jones. The editors have been rather remiss here, omitting from the *Complete Poems* the note of acknowledgment that MacDiarmid appended to the poem as a result of the controversy it aroused. This seems tough on Glyn Jones; and indeed Grieve and Aitken might have had the decency to preserve the footnote MacDiarmid had the decency to add. There was no need for this ruthless arrogation of another man's work, especially by one who already had so many perfect lyrics of his own to his credit. Consider, also, the curious intimations of snobbery, strangely at variance with the demands for a better world. The 'First Hymn to Lenin' is dedicated to Prince D. S. Mirsky; elsewhere an attack on 'vicious nobles' appears on the same page as a dedication to the Duke of Montrose. Can it be that this proud radical dearly loved a lord? No doubt these noble dedicatees are, or were, the least vicious of men; but the use of their names strikes an oddly Augustan note.

Still, the weaknesses are as nothing to the strengths; and when a great poet is recently dead it is the strengths we must honour. Not the least of these was MacDiarmid's determination to write on the grand scale. At a time when poets of the mainstream – now little more than a trickle – refused, and continue to refuse, the challenge of larger forms (I would make exceptions of Auden's *New Year Letter* and MacNeice's *Autumn Journal*), MacDiarmid returned constantly to its exciting possibilities, which included the possibility of 'magnificent failure'. 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle' was the first of these attempts, and contains many fine things, not least the lyric so much admired by Yeats, 'O wha's been here afore me, lass?'; but the technical doggedness becomes discouraging; and the same is true of the ill-conceived 'To Circumjack Cencrastus'. 'In Memoriam James Joyce' I find a good read, though hardly a great poem – too hectoring, too overpoweringly encyclopedic. MacDiarmid's failure with the long poem is, of course, the failure of every modern poet who attempts it, at any rate in English. The orchestra has been dispersed in our diffractive century, and the choral cry of 'Freude!' deflated, if not positively discredited. The only music we recognise is that of the euphuistic and ironical quartet or the wandering individual instrument, be it violin or bagpipe.

So we return to the short poem, at which

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MacDiarmid excelled. Scattered through these volumes are many 'gowden lyrics', and a judicious selection of these would be enough to establish their author as one of the finest and most original poets of our time. Most are in Scots, and some in English; all are passionate, tender, compact, a few aphoristic. I'm thinking not only of the poems in *Sangshaw* and *Penny Wheep*, but more particularly of the 'Shetland Lyrics' in *Stony Limits*, 'With a Lifting of the Head', and 'Skald's Death' (skald: a Norse bard):

I have known all the storms that roll.
I have been a singer after the fashion
Of my people, a poet of passion.
All that is past.
Quiet has come into my soul.
Life's tempest is done.
I lie at last
A bird cliff under the midnight sun.

MacDiarmid's life was one long battle – a battle for recognition, for financial equilibrium, for the kind of Scotland he wanted and the kind of poetry he wanted. If he was a prey to extremism and paranoia, if he was sometimes doctrinaire or asinine, these were the prerogatives of a courageous spirit who set himself an impossible task. And in the long view, the theoptic view if you like, who is to say that he wasn't more often right than wrong? I don't know what epitaph appears, or will appear, over his grave in Biggar, Lanarkshire, but in fact his epitaph was spoken long ago by the Earl of Douglas on the morning of the Battle of Otterburn, a conflict which, for the dead poet, remained unresolved:

Last night I dreamed a dreary dream
Beyond the isle of Skye.
I saw a dead man win a fight
And I think that man was I.

Paul Addison

The Goat-Footed Bard

Lloyd George: The People's Champion, 1902-1911 by JOHN GRIGG *Eyre Methuen* £10.50

Lloyd George was a man of magnetic appeal, fascinating even to his enemies, and John Grigg is a biographer who loves his subject and captures him with artistry. The second volume of his life of Lloyd George is, like the first, a pleasure to read, and conveys the zest for action and buoyant sense of fun radiated by L. G. himself. There are fresh titbits from the erring husband's love life, including menacing letters from a Mrs G., and optimistic letters from a Miss G. who offered to supplant his wife and deck herself in a diamond tiara at his expense. There is enjoyment too in the generous extracts from Lloyd George's speeches to public meetings, every one of them an exercise in brazen effrontery, but full of deft wit and biblical imagery: no one had castigated the rich in such full-blooded popular language since William Cobbett.

Always on the make, Lloyd George enjoyed the risks of the political game, and Mr Grigg portrays the tense atmosphere of high stakes in a Liberal team of ambitious rivals. The achievements are here too: legislation at the Board of Trade, the People's Budget, the National Insurance Act, all patiently explained with such graceful lucidity that they slip down the throat like oysters. But the hard question must be put, and the scholarly hanging judge brought in: does Mr Grigg have anything new and important to say?

An answer can be found by a roundabout route taking us back to the days when Lloyd George was in his prime and yet to be the subject of historical inquiry. In the eyes of many of his contemporaries Lloyd George was a cynical, rootless opportunist: a political genius no doubt, but a mysterious figure of murky and unfathomable motives. The idea that Lloyd George was an unsavoury enigma was patented by Keynes, who described him as 'this goat-footed bard, this half-human visitor to our age', a man in whom he detected a 'flavour of final purposelessness, inner irresponsibility, existence outside or away from our Anglo-Saxon world of good and evil'.

Keynes was revealing more about himself than about Lloyd George, for Lloyd George was the great outsider whom very few of the insiders ever understood. He had his own traditions and beliefs, but they were outside the experience of the Establishment in which he moved. He was a Welshman among English and Scots: he could speak their language and a private language as well. He was an immigrant from a class structure which had no equivalent outside Wales and there was no stock type he could be equated with. He was not a public school man or a Balliol Scot or a liberal high-thinker or a self-educated worker. What then could he be but some elemental force – the Goat, the Welsh Wizard, the Great Beast of the Forest? To aggravate the problem, Lloyd George was a man of profoundly secular and agnostic outlook, a stranger in this respect even to his native land and the dissenting faith in which he had been reared. In a political world of men who professed principles of one kind or another, his inability to take any dogma seriously was a cause of perplexity. Lloyd George paid a high price for his isolation. He was in fact no more ambitious, disloyal, corrupt or opportunist than any other major politician of his time: but the others had a front of respectability without his genius, while Lloyd George went down beneath a weight of cant and misrepresentation. By the end of his career he was the kind of ex-great man, familiar in our own day, from whom no one would accept a five-pound note.

The passing of time has liberated Lloyd George from his critics, and since the 1960s a revolution in opinion has been in progress. The very qualities for which he was once condemned seem to have struck through to modern imaginations, as though his values were now peculiarly sympathetic and admirable. It was A.J.P. Taylor who fired the first shot in the revolution, and since then a swarm of historians has settled down to analyse every episode and aspect of Lloyd George's career. The Welshman, the social reformer, the industrial wizard, the war politician, the family man, the lover of Frances Stevenson, the rising young star and the dangerous old man, have all been scrutinised. A host of misunderstandings have been dissolved away, and a new Lloyd George has been taking the place of the old. It used to be thought that Lloyd George began as an authentic radical with fire in his belly and degenerated into a corrupt opportunist. Now we realise that neither half of the caricature is true. From his earliest days Lloyd George believed in capitalism, the Empire, and a little financial speculation on the side. His radicalism was always of a different kind, a search for practical solutions which cut across party lines and aimed to reconcile warring groups.

Mr Grigg has always been a prominent revisionist, and in his new book sets the record straight on a number of episodes with the help of previously unpublished letters and diaries. Lloyd George was, it appears, privately bored by the cause of the Welsh dissenters which he championed so eloquently. He did not aim for a confrontation with the House of Lords over the People's Budget, but hoped they would give way. He was frightened of the class war and after the settlement of the 1911 rail strike was thankful to have avoided a 'river of blood' between Liberalism and Labour. But he found King George V obtuse about working-class life: 'The King is hostile to the bone to all who are working to lift the workman out of the mire.' The true Lloyd George, Mr Grigg tells us, was 'a patriotic radical of the Left Centre', opposed to doctrinaire policies of all kind, and anxious to strengthen the executive.

There is then some news about Lloyd George, and there would have been more had Mr Grigg not been prevented from reading

This English

We are sometimes reproached for being too hard on the homophone; printers and copy-takers, we're told, often play a part in these slips (e.g. the *Guardian*'s 'populace crowds' of 17 November). Well, no such excuses can protect our first two culprits this week, where the degree of divergence from the intended meaning points to something much more straightforward: startling ignorance on the part of the writer. A snap tautology, a misplaced apposition and a refugee from 'Situations Corner' round off the week. £3 for the first entry, £2 for the others printed.

☐ At first sight, the timing of today's broadcast of the new production of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* is little short of disastrous. But, when cholera has subsided, it will be seen to be an excellent arrangement ... **Personal Choice** *The Times* (Hope Edwards)

☐ The thought of Ashton and Skinner humbly praying for anything stretches my credibility to breaking point. **Londoner's Diary** *Evening Standard* (D. Glencross)

☐ Young blue-shirted and red-bereted youths gave the stiff right-arm fascist salute . . . *Guardian* (K. Edinburgh)

☐ Almost everything depends on the large Indonesian gas field (which was discovered looking for oil). *Financial Times* (E. Mantner)

☐ Kangol has introduced the service because of the growing statistics of injury to unrestrained young children in automotive impact situations. *Civil Service Motoring* (T. W. V. Jones)

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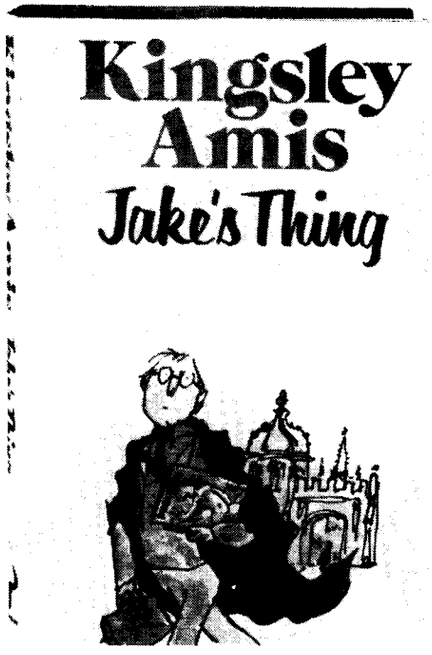

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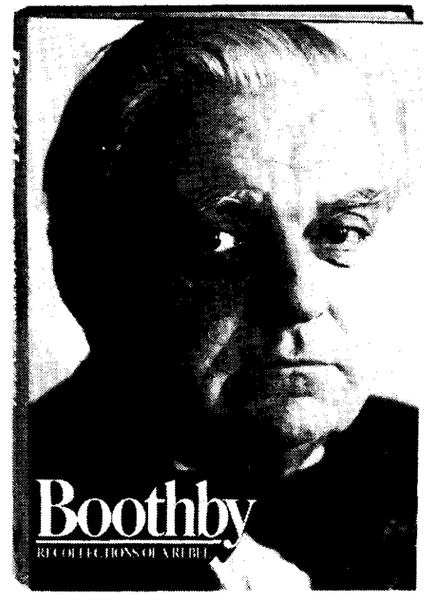

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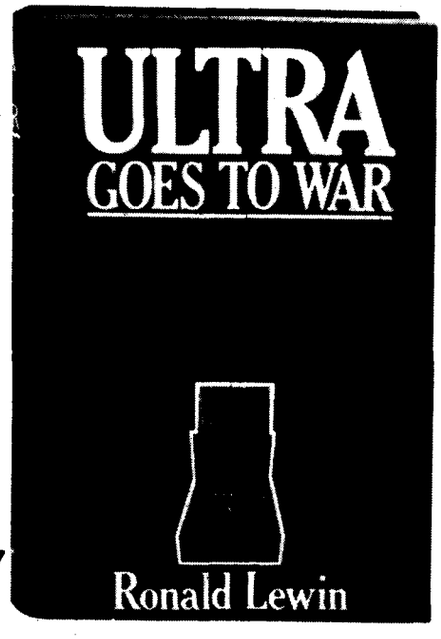

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the many letters which Lloyd George wrote to his uncle and brother in Criccieth. But the great quality of his book does not lie in the untangling of particular issues or the discussion of Lloyd George's place in the structure of power. The surprise, renewed from the first volume, is the style and spirit of Lloyd George himself, so utterly at variance with earlier accounts. Compare Churchill with his broadsides, domineering manner and noisy, elephantine approach to Cabinets and committees. Lloyd George had all the delicate skills, the feline footwork, the flattering smiles and warning glances, the beautifully balanced formulae which squared all parties to a dispute. When he fought hard, it was only to prepare a negotiating position from which to conciliate and reconcile the enemy. John Grigg has given us the most intimate and subtly drawn portrait we have ever had of this remarkable man. His book leaves in the memory a vivid impression of a politician with a deep sense of community, and the managerial magic to heal the wounds of division.

Kingsley Amis

Drunk In This Way

The World Book of Whisky by BRIAN MURPHY
Collins £10.95

Books on booze tend to shift from – as a librarian might say – terms of high extension and low intension to the opposite way round. In other and less horrible words, where you used to get encyclopedias of wine with maps of every vineyard in the world and bartenders' guides that told how to do everything from mixing a Hot Pants on the Rocks (vodka, Maraschino and Angostura) to dealing with drunks and cheats, you now get treatises on individual regions and types of drink. The most highly-intensive tipple-tract I know is John Doxat's *Stirred – Not Shaken,* nearly 200 packed pages on a mixture of one spirit and one wine, the Dry Martini.

It would be hazardous to emulate Doxat's virtuosic feat; whisky is a more comfortably-sized subject. Brian Murphy fills it out a little by succumbing to a perennial temptation of the alcoholographer and tracing everything back to its starting-point. Thus 'primitive man' may have done his first toping out of pools full of rotting fruit or barley-containers in which rainwater had accumulated. Indeed he may; we are on surer ground with the introduction of distilling into Spain by the Moors about the year 1200. But there is a question here.

Like most other commentators, the author credits the Moors, or rather the Arabs, with inventing as well as disseminating the process. It is quite true that 'alcohol' and 'alembic' (part of a type of pot still that is used to this day for the making of cognac and armagnac) are Arabic-derived words, though, *pace* Mr Murphy, 'alcohol' isn't quite 'al' (='the') plus 'kohl' (='Eastern eye-make-up'); there was an earlier stage when it meant something like 'sublimate' or 'essence'. Anyway, another school of thought declares there to be no hard evidence of actual invention by the Arabs, who on this view merely handed on what they had learnt from Byzantine or even Chinese originators. And 'Strongbow', Earl of Pembroke, is said to have noticed that the Irish were already drinking whiskey when he invaded them in 1170. Most probably, like the human race, the stuff turned up independently in more than one place in the same eon or so.

Neither Mr Murphy's book nor whisky itself stands or falls over this matter of origins. The history of the drink given here – technological, financial, economic, social – is thorough and also pleasantly digressive. The literary section starts with Holinshed, who must have been stoned on vodka when he wrote in 1578 that *uisage beatha* (the ancestor of Scotch) 'keepeth and preserveth the head from whirling ... the tongue from lisping ... the hands from shivering', though he adds truly enough that it also keepeth the guts from rumbling. Johnson's commendation of it as strong but not pungent, and 'preferable to any English malt brandy', whatever dreadful thing that might have been, is quoted here, but not his further remark on the same occasion that he had no chance of asking how it was made, 'nor do I wish to improve the art of making poison pleasant'. He must have been in one of his off-the-drink spells.

Mr Murphy rightly stresses the supreme importance of barley in the making of Scotch, observing that present-day distillers go far afield for this material, as far as Australia and India; 'ancient Scottish barley did not produce as rich a malt [the treated cereal, not the liquor] as modern imported barley'. This is made to sound like a gain, but I wonder. Professor R. J. S. McDowell, an authority Mr Murphy has a proper respect for, suggests the reverse in *The Whiskies of Scotland,* Highland barley being poor in starch and so yielding less alcohol per corn, but giving the result more flavour with its higher fat and protein content. Oh well, we'd need a time-machine to get any further along those lines.

A Scotch is also for ned by the local water, the peat used in kilning (Islay peat has a lot of seaweed in it, which some say they can taste in Laphroaig and other malts from that island), the shape of the still and the method of heating it, the proportion and composition of 'impurities' admitted by the stillman, the humidity of the warehouse in which ageing takes place, the size and type of cask, and here and there less obvious agencies: the proprietor of Linkwood, a Speyside malt admired by Professor McDowell, once declined to have spiders' webs removed from his distillery lest quality suffer. Mr Murphy lets this fall in the course of a general survey of malts and blends. Of the latter he remarks that, the classier kinds like Chivas Regal excepted, they are much of a muchness. Well said; so too, in effect, that Scotch is not really suitable for mixing with anything but water. The other day I tried it on purpose with lemonade, the favourite additive of the Scots themselves, who often get it free in bars, and was quite struck by how revolting the result was.

The last third of the book treats of the rest of the whisky world, starting with the American product. There are good stories not only of Prohibition (a recipe for hooch made my hair stand on end) but of the less-studied Whiskey War of 1794, settled in the nick of time by George Washington, who turns out to have been among other things a commercial distiller of rye. Irish comes third, perhaps surprisingly in view of the author's name. Even more surprisingly, he has never tasted the illicit version, potheen, not for the lack of trying, he says. Well, I once got a glass of it in the office of the editor of a leading national newspaper without any trouble at all; I could tell it was pretty sexy, kind of like directors' potheen, and I found it quite smooth but so alarming that I left it unfinished, which I hope is saying something.

After Canada, whose inhabitants have achieved the expected impossible by contriving a boring whisky, come strange sources like Bolivia (with the highest distillery in the world at 12,000 feet), the USSR (which used to make a brand called Pollynnaia, flavoured with wormwood) and Thailand (Red Cock is out in front). Japan of course is in the ascendent. Mr Murphy, who writes vigorously throughout but not everywhere with due care and attention, says of its products that 'they do not imitate Scotch but are whiskies very much in their own right. Drunk in this way, you will discover their true excellence.' I'm sure it's as good a way as any.

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Anthony Quinton

Pardon?

U and Non-U Revisited edited by Richard Buckle *Debrett's Peerage Ltd* £3.75

At an early stage of the film *Harper*, Paul Newman, playing a version of Ross Macdonald's private detective, fishes in the kitchen waste receptacle for a paper cone full of the coffee grounds of the previous day to prepare a breakfast cup for himself. There is something of that quality about *U and Non-U Revisited*. In it Richard Buckle has assembled a group of rather spasmodic performers to help him rake over the embers of a conversationally stimulating firework-display of two decades ago.

Lady Mosley expresses herself with characteristic force on the origins of the whole thing. Her sister, Nancy Mitford, she says, came to write about the social significance of vocabulary by accident. Forced to pad out an *Encounter* article about the aristocracy to fill the space allotted her, she drew heavily on a learned essay in a Finnish philological magazine by Professor Alan S. C. Ross on indications of upper-class status in choice of words. It evidently met a need, at any rate.

Class, it is plain, is the forbidden topic of the age, the thing that brings a blush to the egalitarian's cheek. Auberon Waugh is our jovial, breezy John Cleland; Wodehouse and Buchan our Ovid and Propertius. Attempts are made to render the subject harmless by the marxian dodge of seeing class as entirely a matter of money and the 'relations of production', just as old-fashioned books on sex were all about such unlubricious matters as the vas deferens and Fallopian tubes. But such skirts on the legs of the billiard table really deceive no one.

Here, then, is a literary parallel to *Oh! Calcutta*: a quickly-changing sequence of naughty items. In practice, it turns out to be rather tame and lacking in direction. From time to time contributors succumb to the thought that feelings should not be hurt. The pursuit of answers to questions of substance peters out into autobiographical jottings.

Debrett's Peerage Ltd., the book's publishers, are represented in it by both the managing director of the firm and the editor of the volume it is named from. The former interestingly suggests that linguistic class-indicators are needed here because English people of all classes look much alike. The editor shows a fine exclusive spirit in this anecdote:

> When Sir Hugh Smithson, a Yorkshire baronet, married the Percy heiress, he changed his name to Percy and took his seat as Earl of Northumberland. He then asked his king, George II, for the Garter, saying he was the first Earl of Northumberland not to be given this honour. The king replied he was the first Smithson to ask for it.

Also heard from are Cecil Beaton in a breathless resumé of the more name-dropping side of his reminiscences; Christopher Sykes a little idiosyncratic on men's clothes (I have not noticed the abandonment of tight jeans by young women – they seem tighter than ever); Lord Harewood almost imperceptibly inter-

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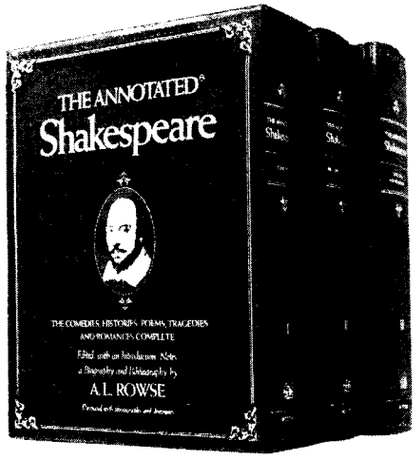

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viewed in a lively piece listing peers with rudely mechanical occupations like detective constable and corporation gardener; the editor himself in an irrelevantly, but not unreasonably, self-pitying autobiographical effusion.

There is a glossary which depends too much on Betjeman's great poem (first seen in this paper) and genealogical proof of the relatedness of most of the contributors. Sir Iain Moncreiffe of that Ilk, Bart, observes that 'nobody would have accused Hitler or Stalin of being gentlemen'. Christopher Sykes memorably recalls some friends: 'I have known two men who, owing to war-wounds, had to ride side-saddle. Neither wore a habit.'

We come out where Nancy Mitford went in. The best thing in the book is a marvellous list of clichés of fairly recent coinage, supplied on pages 37 and 38: you name it, believe you me, how right you are, and so splendidly on. These are produced by Professor Ross, the original onlie begetter, and prove a point well known to readers of old-style pornography: an ounce of concrete detail is worth a ton of vague generality. 'I ran my hand over her vast . . .' is altogether to be preferred to 'again and yet again I was ravished by transports of indescribable excitement'. This little stocking-filler comes rather dear at £3.75 (but then what doesn't these days?). Wealthy people will find it makes a nice gift for relatives.

Dennis Potter

Pier Groups

The Blackpool Landlady by JOHN K. WALTON
Manchester £5.95

I last went to Blackpool when I was an adolescent, more than a quarter of a century ago. Opening sentences in even the shortest pieces are difficult to compose at the best of times, but this particular one understandably fills me with genuine despondence. Not only do I recall the reflection of the milky blue streetlight slithering and sliding in the puddled wet of the pavement, and the sound of two girls in patterned blouses laughing in the spark-shower of the bumper-cars, but there swoops back from what I must now acknowledge to be quite another person in absolutely another time such a vinegary sharp sense of a defunct culture that I am left scrabbling around for the best word to slot accurately between those near synonyms, nostalgia and nausea.

As usual, it is the incidental detail in a dull and repetitive stretch of prose which darts out most lethally at the browsing head. I could wait a long time before experiencing any compulsion to read 'a social history of the seaside landlady', especially one that – in the legendary style of its subject – levies a Supplementary Fee for the use of the cruet by making you pay good temper for the would-be salty asides. But *The Blackpool Landlady*, as indigestible as a slab of boarding-house pudding, hints at images and memories, actual or lovingly presumed, which can make many people go so far as to moan aloud with delicious pain.

There is, for instance, a photograph in the book of a landlady and her husband standing at what seems to be the front door of what must certainly be termed their Establishment. They are beaming into an old August sunshine with proprietorial smiles. He has both his hands in the pockets of his rather baggy and waveringly creased trousers and looks as though he has just returned from afternoon gossip, scissors and brilliantine at his friend the barber's. The landlady herself has only one hand in the pocket of her ample pinafore, so that the other remains free to flick away a speck of dust or point a direction or bang down a saucepan of soggy greens on the fat old cooker squatting somewhere in the shadowy cavern beyond. Step around them and you will surely find – oh, come on.

A hall with green or chocolate paint and a gate-leg table. A door off to The Lounge, where an old man with braces is nodding off to sleep in a plumply shabby armchair squeezed into the corner. Home from home, except for traces of nervous formality, extra anxiety about the weather, an alert eye on the bread-and-butter plate, and so on into the night when the beds might creak and the steaming residue of too much beer have to be discharged into too little space with too much thought about both noise and personal propriety.

Out beyond the overcrowded bedrooms and chipped wash-basins, a good walk up the dingy street, lie the gardens, the front, the sea, sand and sad-eyed donkeys. The book takes us back to the days when almost no working people went abroad except to fight, and a motor-car was a sign more of social than geographical mobility. Whole towns would descend in holiday week upon Blackpool and pack themselves into the small boarding-houses in back streets not very unlike the ones they had temporarily deserted. A cheerfully aggressive horde had to be serviced in a very narrow season, and in these circumstances – with order to be kept, and enough money to be made to eke out the winter of shuttered arcades and deserted piers – it was inevitable that the seaside landlady should become a figure of ambiguously affectionate horror.

Mr Walton leads off very nicely by examining the comic postcard stereotype, and informs us that the Blackpool Hotel and Guest House Association 'have rejected the label "landlady" because of its connotations', a delicate admission not so much of past rapacity now disowned but of continued sharpness. The working class has been conned into no longer thinking of itself as the working class and does not greatly care to be reminded of old language even – or especially – when it remains accurate. I know of what used to be called a Working Men's Club that has duly changed its name to a Social Club in more than a nod of acknowledgment to those who believe that by shifting the inner phrases of politics they have also somewhat altered the realities of power.

The Blackpool Landlady attempts to describe the way in which the resort fitted itself out for the growing influx of holiday-makers from the mill towns and then the industrial Midlands, an inland tide fetching up against a watering-hole that turned itself into the biggest, brightest, most splendidly vulgar seaside business in England. But the book is like a deck-chair: sagging badly in the middle, folding up inconveniently under the weight of its own slack diligence, and facing out to a

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sludge of snot-coloured prose much too reminiscent of the bank-holiday ocean.

The author concludes that

> . . . at no time . . . have the prospects in the lower reaches of the accommodation industry looked more bleak. Higher up the scale, plenty of options remain open, and the wives of businessmen who fear redundancy are coming into the trade, acquiring catering skills and preparing to go up-market.

Again, the wretched language unconsciously delineates a special kind of social change: the chain eating-house, the calculated package, the replacement of the old penny-pinching landlady with the new penny-pinching accountant. 'The new Blackpool is becoming much closer to the national and international patterns of holiday-making.'

The wind comes in with such a smack from across the sea that it can make your eyes sting and water. Or is it just the past, which is not only 'another country' but another sort of ache? Guests are reminded not to bring food purchased elsewhere into the bedrooms – and perhaps memory should carry the same brisk prohibition.

George MacDonald Fraser

The Loser

The Half-Mad Lord by NIKOLAI TOLSTOY
Cape £6.95

'Half-mad' is probably a fair description of Thomas Pitt, second Lord Camelford, for there can be no doubt that on occasion his behaviour was perfectly normal; indeed, he sometimes showed signs of good nature, generosity, and even intelligence. On the other hand, he was a violent, eccentric, arrogant, murderous bully, who would almost certainly have ended up in an institution, either for the criminal or the insane, if he had not been high-born and closely related to William Pitt, Prime Minister. Fortunately, he died in a duel at the age of 29, and Britain was spared the appalling possibility of his rising to a high position in the state, which with his powerful connections and vast ambition he might just have done; on his death, the Foreign Secretary remarked that 'could he have survived . . . he would have been the first man of the age'. It is a hideous thought: the most sympathetic student of Lord Camelford's life must recoil at the idea of his being given charge of even an empty barrow on a desert island – he would have wrecked it, somehow. For with all his vagaries and eccentricities, he had one shining, consistent talent – and that was for failure.

This is not a crime, but when allied with energy, pride, and delusions of grandeur, it can be highly dangerous. The trouble with Lord Camelford was that his failures were not even heroic; they were often ludicrous and rather pathetic. Ambitious for a naval career, he distinguished his first independent command by exchanging broadsides with one of his own side's shore batteries in the dark, and was eventually adjudged unfit ever to have charge of a king's ship again; he tried to penetrate revolutionary France in disguise,

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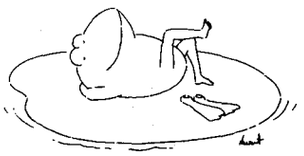

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JOHN MURRAY

apparently to assassinate Citizen Barras, and managed to get himself arrested before he had even left England; as owner of the rottenest and safest borough in the country, Old Sarum, he picked as his candidate an ineligible parson; aspiring to be foremost among the sporting bucks, he backed an undistinguished pug against Jem Belcher, perhaps the most lethal fighter of the day; when a Camelford horse was entered for the Derby, it finished ninth . . . and so on. It was probably inevitable that in the only duel he ever fought, his opponent should have been one of the best shots in England.

Yet his career had begun promisingly enough. He escaped into the Navy from what seems to have been an unhappy childhood – he ran away from Charterhouse after nine days – and as a midshipman survived an astonishing adventure when his ship struck an iceberg, was abandoned by most of its crew, and finally limped into the Cape, half-sinking. Later he sailed with Vancouver, who disciplined him with repeated beatings; Camelford, denied a duel, took revenge by caning his commander in the street. His naval career survived that episode, and an even more scandalous one when he shot an unarmed fellow-officer dead in cold blood; a court-martial acquitted him on the ground that he was suppressing mutiny, but it reads like a poor excuse. It was not his first killing – he had also stabbed a man fatally during a press-gang scuffle.

By now established as an eccentric, and occasional homicidal maniac, Camelford embarked on even more bizarre episodes; he had a grandiose scheme for engineering a British takeover of Spain's South American Empire, which never got beyond the planning stage, and his naval career came to an inglorious end with his attempt to assassinate Barras – that, at any rate, appears to have been what he intended when he was arrested by suspicious customs men at Dover, with pistols, a dagger, and a letter of introduction to Barras in his pocket. Returning to civilian life, he dabbled in politics, made half-hearted attempts to get back into the war, brawled in theatres, conducted a vague sort of love-affair with Lady Hester Stanhope (who obviously liked and admired him), fought ferociously with a mob who attacked his house because he would not light his windows in celebration of peace with France, distributed vast sums to the poor and needy, and finally met his end in a senseless duel with a friend over a former mistress. To Camelford's credit, he did his best beforehand to shield his antagonist from the consequences of their meeting; he died like a gentleman – and a fool.

Out of all this Nikolai Tolstoy has fashioned a readable and entertaining biography, which suffers a little from his attempt to give Camelford a more heroic stature than, on the evidence, he seems to deserve; he is scrupulous in weighing his man's strange character, but he does tend to speculate rather freely, and to over-interpret into mountains events which look suspiciously like molehills. For example, the alleged attempt to assassinate Napoleon: certainly Camelford made a secret visit to France under a false name in 1801-2, spent months in mysterious journeyings, excited the attention of the French police (who were understandably interested in him after the Barras affair), and was eventually arrested and ignominiously shown out of the country. And certainly Camelford was the owner of a repeating pistol. But there seems no sound evidence to support Count Tolstoy's picture of Camelford armed with his deadly weapon, preparing to murder Boney. Indeed, there is no evidence that Camelford took his pistol to France at all – if he did, how did Fouché's police fail to find it after Camelford's arrest, and how did Camelford manage to bring it back to England when he was expelled?

It is possible, reviewing a life in which he wasted all his advantages of birth, wealth, strength, good looks, and some amiable qualities (along with a rare paranoia and brutality), to feel sorry for Camelford – but not to take him seriously. Poor soul, he was half-mad. Much is said of his great gifts and exceptional qualities, but really there is no evidence here that he had any. No doubt he was unfortunate, and if ever a man had a knack of riding a losing streak, he did. Even beyond the grave his plans continued to go awry: he had left orders that he was to be buried on an island in Switzerland, so it seems perfectly natural that his body now rests under a Soho carpark. It is this gift for getting things wrong which makes it quite impossible to compare him (as the blurb of this book does) with the Regency heroes of Jeffrey Farnol and Georgette Heyer – their horses *never* finished ninth in the Derby.

Arthur Marshall

Oo-Revoo

Nice One Cyril by CYRIL FLETCHER *Barrie & Jenkins* £4.95

Robert Morley's Book of Bricks *Weidenfeld* £3.50

Public performers in the field of entertainment, whether 'straight' or musical, are seldom well fitted to parade before us in book form the various stepping-stones of their careers. Skilful as they may be in handling sticks of make-up and audiences, the handling of a pen is another matter. The *mot juste* and the *bon mot* tend to elude them. They often rely, fatally, on old newspaper cuttings ('As you observe, I seemed to go down well enough in Byfleet'). Their sense of humour that appeared so sharp up there on the stage of the Holborn Empire or the Haymarket Theatre does not stand up to close scrutiny in print (beware especially of chapters called 'An Amusing Mishap'). Some of the best of them – George Robey, Irene Vanbrugh, José Collins – have all come pretty good autobiographical croppers.

How agreeable then to welcome, as an exception, Cyril Fletcher, so visually well known to us as a genial and large-eyed contributor to *What's My Line?* and more recently in *That's Life.* But then Mr Fletcher is a writer too, as he demonstrates soon enough in this extremely engaging and enjoyable book. Emerging from a loving family whose breadwinner was a town clerk brought up by provincial Methodist grocers, he is particularly good on childhood's searing memories – as a reluctant page at his aunt's wedding and dressed in a pale-beige tussore suit, or being forced to visit an ancient and arthritic Dickensian relation who croaked out, 'Kiss me but

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mind me feet'. And thence, neatly avoiding a career in insurance, into the chancy world of paint and powder and an engagement with the best of all seaside entertainments, Greatrex Newman's 'Fol-de-Rols', remembering to keep a straight face when, on the season's last night, the chairman of the local entertainments committee, announcing that the show would return next year, invariably ended with the words, 'And so it is not goodbye, it is only oo-revoo'.

Inexplicably turned down by the BBC Variety Department ('They didn't actually say I was too tall for the microphone, but that was the only thing they left out'), he took to the road and the *splendeurs et misères* of a strolling player's life, rehearsing at the 'Goat and Compasses', sharing, with 'The Dancing Volonoff Twins', not only theatrical digs but an outdoor garden privy, struggling to keep intact a proud family motto ('No Fletcher has ever used newspaper'). In the music-hall world, now so sadly vanished, he is the first gratefully to acknowledge kindnesses and encouragements from such experts as Max Miller and Billy Bennett who, with his dilapidated evening dress, cummerbund and large brown boots, was Queen Mary's favourite comedian. There was also the unforgettable Nellie Wallace ('Her face was a cross between the Duke of Wellington and Ken Dodd') who was apt to pinch laughs belonging to others and with whom Mr Fletcher had once to reason ('I slapped her across the face with a property kipper').

Busy all day long with gardening, decorating, running a lecture agency, performing, broadcasting and other activities, many of them philanthropic, Cyril Fletcher operates against the background of an entirely happy marriage and spares us any 'Meanwhile, Cynthia and I had drifted apart' sections. How remarkable to discover that that gormless army private recitation, 'Dreaming of Thee', which made his radio name, was originally written, quite seriously, by Edgar Wallace when he was the Kipling manqué of South Africa ('I became a household name like Guinness or Harpic'). Our author is well aware of the sometimes doubtful benefits of becoming a public face – the nudgings, the whisperings, the mistakes. There was a lady who wished to know whether he was indeed he ('My friend said that you were a man made up to look like Cyril Fletcher'). There is the unanswerable 'Oh, it *is* you. I said that I thought it was'. Then there are those who are disinclined to admit that they have been enjoying themselves ('My sister nearly died of laughing'). And there is the moment when, after a performance given free for some charity, the organiser approaches clutching a gift bottle ('If it's wrapped, it's sherry').

Jolly Robert Morley, the first to see the fun in anything, is an ideal editor and compiler of a *Book of Bricks* (all profits to the National Society for Autistic Children, so stump up at once), and here dropped bricks are to be found by the empty hodful and largely supplied by people known as 'names'. Desmond Morris contributes an interesting introduction in which he seeks to show that the dropping of bricks is not nearly as accidental as it may seem, but is inspired by a Freudian something (inviting a man with crossed eyes to 'have a squint at this').

Mistaken identities loom large (Princess Margaret, asked whether that sister of hers was still flourishing, replied, 'Still Queen') and

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picture the embarrassment of Sir Malcolm Sargent, who dearly loved the nobs, proudly presenting a soloist to the King of Norway, only to hear a regal voice politely correct him with one word, 'Sweden'. There are, too, assorted Spoonerisms, clean and unclean. Of the first, a painter, asked by Her Majesty whether he had any brothers, heard himself replying, 'No, Sam, but I have two misters'. Of the latter kind, a host cheerfully dispensed drinks with a cry of 'Anyone for randy or bum?', and we must all be very careful about Buck's Club's special drink, which is known as Buck's Fizz.

Each will have his own favourite. There was the guest at a city dinner who, after the Loyal Toast, asked if he might smoke and received the reassuring reply 'But of course – the Queen is drunk'. Sir John Gielgud, in a class by himself, figures freely, and I have a place in my heart for Madame de Gaulle who, struggling with our language and being asked what she most looked forward to in her retirement, answered loudly and happily, 'a penis'. It is thought that it was the word 'appiness' that she was really after.

Douglas Johnson

Dead Souls

The Horse of Pride: Life in a Breton Village by PIERRE JAKEZ HÉLIAS translated by June Guicharnaud *Yale University Press* £10.80
Death in Paris, 1795-1801 by RICHARD COBB *Oxford* £4.95

The idea of death is repulsive. As Claudio says in *Measure for Measure*, 'the weariest and most loathed worldly life/That age, ache, penury and imprisonment/Can lay on nature, is a paradise/To what we fear of death'. But was it really so? There are those who say that the subject of death has become to us what sex was, say, to the Victorians. Something to be repressed and excluded, or, if it has to come into conversation and consciousness, something to be deformed and prettified. And this is because we are no longer born in the bed in which we were conceived, and we might not die in a bed which is similar to it, surrounded by friends and relatives, nourished by the sacramental ordinances of the church, and having heavy coins placed on our eyelids by those closest to us in life. Death has become institutionalised and is even a subject for casuistry. When is a man really dead? we are moved to ask.

Hence historians, and those whose reminiscences are so elegant and coherent that they add lustre to history, look back to the days when the setting and process of dying were totally different. Pierre-Jakez Hélias, recalling his Breton village as it was 50 years ago, describes the dying as giving a performance, one that was meant for the whole community. The dying and their family knew, no matter how poor they were, that for once in their lives they were the stars; they died in public (like the Kings of former times, said the author's uncle, a man who could neither read nor write). The performance began as the priest left the presbytery, preceded by an altar-boy ringing a small bell, and as he went to the dying person's house people would kneel down and cross themselves. At the house the family was already present; the neighbours had gathered round holding their rosaries. And once extreme unction had been administered, everyone awaited the death. The church bells would toll the knell, seven strokes for a woman, nine for a man. Those working in the fields would stand and recite a *pater* and an *ave*. They had never heard of Millet, but as Pierre-Jakez Hélias explains it, everything fell into place to form a replica of *The Angelus*.

In the dead man's house the clock would be stopped, mirrors covered, framed photographs hidden, frivolous objects put away. There was only a collection of crosses and crucifixes, as the dead man was dressed in his best clothes, with a blessed palm soaking in a white dish of holy water on the bed table. Neighbours would take over the running of the house and would reprove the family if, at such a time, they allowed their thoughts to turn to the worries of everyday life. Groups of men wearing their hats and carrying their sticks would walk through the country to inform all those who were related in any way to the dead man. Even if you had already heard the news, you had to wait until the special messenger came, and if he did not come you would know that you were not expected to attend the funeral. Then you would not do so. It was hard enough to be poor. If, in addition, you were prepared to renounce your honour, then you would soon come to the point of losing your name.

The cemetery was in the centre of the village – that is to say, the dead were in the centre of the living, separated from them only by a wall. There were always people in the cemetery, often talking together, as well as praying, spreading gossip or discussing the price of pigs, all subjects which would have interested the buried. When a new cemetery was built outside the town, old people complained that they were relegated to a place far beyond the houses and the village church, from the living and from God, a double misfortune.

Richard Cobb views how people died in the past from a dossier in the archives of the Seine, which lists details of about 400 people who met violent deaths, usually through suicide, accident or murder, during the years 1795 to 1801. He too comments that those who had probably been unimportant during their lives suddenly assumed a great importance in death, as inquiries were made about them, about their identity, about the way in which they died. It is frequently suggested that there is a manner in which one ought to die, and that the missing person, once found and identified, had somehow let his family down in the eyes of their neighbours, by taking his or her departure in a casual, sudden way. They had denied death its due pomp; they had abandoned the opportunity for the display of family grief – as if, because life was hard, it was not something to be given up lightly. So in the recorded cross-examinations the relatives and neighbours fall back on conventional remarks in order to explain their surprise at a form of death which steps outside the limits of behaviour assigned by family, convention, trade and friendship. 'He had been behaving very oddly over the last fortnight', 'she had been completely out of her mind for several months', 'he had become unsociable, avoiding company', 'he had become silent and morose' – these are some of the explanations recorded by Professor Cobb in his fascinating work of exploration.

Of course, it is the living who speak for the dead, and it is natural that they should not wish to give the impression that they were ever in a position to do anything to prevent the suicide from taking place. Sometimes, when there is a long period between the person going missing and the body turning up, there might well be relief at the mystery being solved or the inconvenience of not being able to re-marry or to claim a special poverty allowance being ended. But at times the inter-

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rogation of several witnesses makes things clearer. A woman has been behaving oddly, has mad ideas about being starved by her husband – though everyone knew that this was not true – and had apparently been given medical treatment. There can have been little surprise when she was found with her throat cut.

Professor Cobb shows his typically delicate insight as his reading of the documents reveals the small and intimate societies created by ordinary people in order to protect themselves against the violent and the unexpected. Hélias, whose book was a best-seller in France and which now appears in an abridged English translation, recreates in his reminiscence all the life of his Breton village. But if as a child it was the spectre of death that most terrified him, as it terrified Richard Cobb's witnesses, it is with everyday life that his book is concerned. Talking about death is a pretext for discovering what the living were like.

Jeremy Treglown

Praise Be

Indirect Journey by HAROLD HOBSON *Weidenfeld* £7.50

Harold Hobson is the only child of hard-up, buttoned-up Yorkshire parents. When he was seven, polio paralysed his right side from the hip down. He thinks the shock may have caused his mother to miscarry; whether or not this is true seems less important, now, than the fact that he mentions it, just as he mentions the possibility that his father's frequent and, to him, terrifying tantrums were the result of his own misery that his son was a cripple.

This submerged guilt that his disability had perhaps harmed their marriage can only have reinforced the other more obvious reasons he had for wanting more than anything, he says, to get married himself and live happily ever after. And if Sir Harold is patently chuffed to be a famous theatre critic – the first, he reminds us, to be knighted for this work; rewarded too by his Oxford college, which fulfilled the original goal of his 'indirect journey' by making him a fellow – he is over the moon to be a happy husband and father. His memoir is a romance in which the wedding happens not at the end, but in the middle; and in the last paragraph we go back to it again:

> that burning afternoon in July 1935, when I stood waiting at the altar of the University church in Oxford, and turned to find advancing towards me, in infinite beauty, Elizabeth, who is my inspiration and my joy, my pride and my love, and will be so until I die.

As a statement of fact it is splendid, whatever qualms one may feel about the general not-a-single-quarrel-in-40-years line on what makes a good marriage. As a passage from a book its unembarrassed clichés illustrate both the best and the worst sides of Hobson's writing. He went overboard for plays in the *Sunday Times* as generously as, in this remorselessly optimistic book, he goes overboard for life. It's an approach he gets from his Christianity. His favourite text is 'if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things', and

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he puts up a determined case for its application by reviewers. The trouble with Christian criticism, though, is that – almost by definition – it's undiscriminating, particularly if you go around looking for absolutely any redeemable moment or detail in a work, like an evangelist on the hunt for signs of grace.

Indirect Journey supplies plenty of examples of the implausible ecstasies Hobson's critical salvationism would regularly set off. He mentions a seaside entertainer called McAllister, for example, who did a recitation entitled 'His First Long Trousers'. 'Not only did tears pour down my face,' says Hobson of his response, 'but I understood better both the danger and the excitement of life.' Well, maybe it *was* a good act. But most of us weren't there and have to take it on trust – a trust Hobson's superlatives tended over a long period (or even, let's face it, over a short one) to weaken. Try filling in the missing words in this phrase, for example, and supplying a context: '*(noun)* gloriously (*participle*) till they looked like sunsets in the evening mists of Oban'. A terrific scene-change in the Olivier? A modest lighting-effect at the Roundhouse? An otherwise unnoticed walk-on in a student production at Edinburgh, 'her eyes gloriously shining . . .', etc.? In fact, it's about breakfast: 'great rashers of bacon, and eggs gloriously fried till they looked like sunsets in the evening mists of Oban'.

The grandiose simile is typical of his style, with its constant ballooning up and away from the object into an empyrean of predetermined, heavily literary response. But with the disarming truthfulness that makes the book, like his criticism, so compulsive, Hobson reveals what may have necessitated this two-dimensional rhetoric. Anyone who spends his life watching plays must be suffering from some kind of queasiness about reality, and Hobson has more excuse than most. His parents and his disability combined to present life as a dangerous and off-putting business. He tells us that his mother and father filled him with fear, especially of drink and sex. He vividly remembers seeing a drunk old woman lift her skirts to pee in a gutter, and says that the incident gave him a lifelong hatred of what he calls 'the filthy and the abnormal'. Another result, at a guess, was to confirm his preference for art over life, both as a mode of experience and as a source of ways of describing it. Again and again in his reviews Hobson would lift his own skirts in calculated postures of self-exposure, but the bottom he revealed was safely hidden in other writers' woolly drawers, a Browning poem for glamour, a Donne sermon for hard wear.

Paradoxically, the same revulsion helped produce, he says, his most important contribution as a critic – his openness to sexual shocks when they were presented as art. A deeply satisfied man, he is nonetheless amusedly aware of his own priggishness and has deliberately guarded against letting it interfere, at least negatively, with his judgments. As with his other kinds of critical generosity, this hasn't made him over-selective – if he backed some winners (like Genet), a fair number of losers ran away with his money too. But like every other aspect of the life he describes, it is an impressive victory of will.

It's all a Yorkshire self-made success-story, in fact, full of unselfconsciously delighted references to titled people who've been nice to him, to his daughter's having married the son of a lord or himself having made his wife a Lady, to how much they like staying in the Paris Ritz, and all that. 'Whenever I have put a penny into life,' he says, 'I have been repaid a pound.' There's as much boastfulness as gratitude in the remark, but with the number of pennies he started with a bit of winner's pride doesn't come amiss.

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Bints & Bruises

Henry Miller's Book of Friends by HENRY MILLER *W. H. Allen* £3.95
Sea-Running by MAXIE LANE *Macmillan* £4.95
Arabian Adventures by JOHN GLUBB *Cassell* £6.95

What, apart from the faintly bizarre quality of their names, do Caresse Crosby, Emil Schnellock and Wambly Bald have in common? Never mind who they were: the linking factor is that each, at some stage in his career, was a friend of Henry Miller. At 84 Miller has acquired the same imposing resistance to time as those mysteriously preserved carcases of mammoths discovered floating, during the last century, in Siberian rivers. His longevity in itself seems peculiarly American, and there is a bushy-whiskered, Whitmanesque quality about his writing – generous, unselfconscious and engagingly plain as it always is – which holds distinctly to native traditions. Like Whitman too, he appears tolerant and unselective to an almost unbearable degree: his monstrous, amoebic sympathy continually absorbs and accepts, and even his reading tastes, as mirrored in *The Books In My Life*, show the same vulgar large-heartedness in their penchant for big, beefy numbers like Blaise Cendrars and Rider Haggard.

Friends have, of course, been equally diverse. Everyone knows about Anaïs Nin, if only because, like Wambly Bald's, her name possesses a certain absurd palindromic euphony which plants it firmly in the memory. Temporarily relinquishing writer's Paris and lazy days at Big Sur, Miller now celebrates eight friends from his New York childhood. Each of these sketches is accompanied by a bleak little snapshot of a street or a building,

Tom Paulin

The Impossible Pictures

In this parable of vengeance
There is a grey newsreel
Being shown inside my head.

Its subject is that pointless
Reflection – what might have happened
If this had never been the case?

What happens is that Lenin's brother
(Alexsandr Ulyanov)
Is being led to execution.

He carries a small book
Wrapped in a piece of cloth.
Is it the bible or a text

His brother will be forced to write?
He twists it in his hands.
I think he is frightened.

I am wrong, because suddenly
He strikes an officer on the face –
His gestures now are a jerking

Clockwork anachronism.
He is goosestepped to the scaffold.
The frozen yard of the prison

Is like this dawn of rain showers
And heavy lorries, a gull mewling
In its dream of the Atlantic.

Ah, I say, this is Ireland
And my own place, myself.
I see a Georgian rectory

Square in the salt winds
Above a broken coast,
And the gulls scattering

Their cold cries: I know
That every revenge is nature,
Always on time, like the waves.

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its early-morning emptiness giving to the flat-fronted houses the quality of façades on a film set. A similar greyness characterises Miller's style in the successive portraits. The individuals, Stasiu, Max, Jimmy, Henry, Alec, all seem subordinate to the author's act of remembering them, filters for recollection of a village New York at the turn of the century, and each, either temporarily or permanently, lost during early adulthood, becoming a focus for self-recrimination. Miller has seldom written anything but autobiography, and this, despite its apparent design, is merely another chapter.

Maxie Lane's second volume of memoirs comes garlanded, even more than is usual in such cases, with a selection of plaudits for the first, the notably triumphant *Running*. That, indeed, made its point, and a good deal more clearly than its successor. At the close of the earlier book Maxie had signed on as stoker on a tramp steamer, the *Ardanbhan* out of Greenock, and from here we bump about in a series of ships and crews, from Panama to Sydney and Narvik to Capetown.

The world described is the conventional one of bars, bints and bruises but the experience is invoked for us by a grimly romantic series of incongruities, like the flotsam of the *Titanic*, episodes and images retailed with extraordinary verve, however absurd or grotesque. An Irish seaman, out for the count in a boxing match, is placed on exhibition to the ship's officers and visiting nurses as a labelled work of art. Maxie, having painstakingly duffed up an Australian in a dockside brawl, is momentarily shocked to find the man's gold tooth embedded in his knuckle.

It would all be that much more exhilarating if it were not for the nagging artificiality of the style. The Dylan Thomas-Laurie Lee tradition of never allowing a sentence to pass without adorning the vocabulary or adjusting the syntax is here taken a stage further, as we pitch about between tenses, teeter among dire clusters of impressionistic adverbials, and gape after vanishing pronouns. 'Corey glaring Cyclops, extremely repulsive in wan light of four to eight watch, and crew chaps eyeing same with loathing as it throbbed evil in its gooey mess of ginger pubic and freckled loin.'

Not surprisingly, Glubb Pasha, whose business was never literary, comes across as the best of these three. Modest and gently amused, lacking Miller's benign egocentricity or Lane's word-drunkenness, he engages our sympathy for what is in fact a case of hopeless nostalgia. His book centres upon his years as an administrator in the deserts of Iraq, and provides yet another memorable contribution to that endlessly intriguing composite image of the Englishman among Arabs perpetuated more recently by Wilfred Thesiger.

The author himself, though readily responsive to the glamour of moonlit camel treks and tribal skirmishes, remains the observer rather than the observed. His aim, to judge from a sudden burst of moralising in the last chapter, is to depict a mode of life whose superficial violence, in its pattern of feuds and raiding, concealed a complex balance between nomad and settler, gradually undermined by administrative shortsightedness. Whether soberly chronicling his operations against the Ikhwan rebels or detailing the ridiculous bureaucratic exigency of registering every raiding party at special offices scattered across the desert, Glubb's fluent and convincing storytelling remains faithful to the spirit of the book's subtitle, 'Ten Years of Joyful Service'.

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Helen McNeil

Fractions

Going After Cacciato by TIM O'BRIEN *Cape* £4.95
Asylum and Other Stories by AIDAN HIGGINS *Calder* £5.95 and £2.95
Winter's Tales 24 edited by A. D. MACLEAN *Macmillan* £4.95

After Frenchie was shot through the nose and Bernie was shot with his legs still sticking out of the tunnel, after Billy Boy died of fright, and the dust-off that finally took Buss away left his face behind because pieces of it had stuck to his helmet, Cacciato left too. He was going to Paris, he said. The rest of Tim O'Brien's squad of Vietnam losers followed their baby-faced 'leader' as far as their strength of imagination could carry them. O'Brien calls that place Paris.

Going After Cacciato is about the Vietnam that is available to imagination. Inevitably it imagines a farewell to arms: pursuit of the hunted becomes flight, and duty is best served by desertion. O'Brien's grafting of harsh chunks of reality on to an allegorical series of episodes grates at first, though it is a classical American narrative ploy. Soon, however, the journey seems as real as the war that made it necessary to imagine such an escape, and its extraordinary incidents read as comments on the unreality of ordinary war. It's a strange and impressive balance of realisms. Languages alternate as well with Vietnam slang and an understated nature lyricism offering themselves as linguistic realities.

When the squad are arrested in Iran, a dim officer in *Savak* – 'terrible duty for a man who would rather be killing Kurds' – delightedly explains the fruits of militarism in a society where going AWOL merits public execution. Back in Vietnam, the rich physical reality is contradicted by what it does, since the land itself is the enemy. Every foot of red earth has a VC tunnel under it. Only a literalist of the imagination like Cacciato can take it straight, fishing doggedly in a 'Lake Country' made of bomb craters. Sensitive Spec Four Paul Berlin sees plenty but can't figure out what the Vietnamese feel: 'he had seen it all, before seeing it', and so he only sees landscape. Cacciato himself is the least of it, an embarrassingly blank symbolic presence.

Ultimately Spec Four fantasies stay stuck at mere 'possibility'. When obligation raises its crew-cut head, the dreamer awakes into his nightmare. At the end of *Going After Cacciato* as at the beginning, Vietnam is merely 'very sad'. The soldiers' apolitical perceptions are meant to be sympathetic but they too are about limitations. O'Brien's soldiers are free to imagine so long as they remember they are paid not to think.

Aidan Higgins's collection begins with a tale of Joycean paralysis spread over the four Kervick sisters. 'Intolerable', 'grotesque', 'unprepossessing' spinsters, one of them begins the book by dying in a room whose very furnishings 'were not remarkable'. Higgins's language shares his hatred of his subject: the characters are handled for rage. This loathing takes so well that when Higgins attributes feelings to Sevy, the mysteriously 'archaic' German woman in Lebensraum, it simply doesn't register as human emotion. Even her death seems weirdly to be an attribute of the words used to describe it. Higgins's metaphors carry most of the meaning: a man who, like a traveller, is 'perpetually in the wrong context', the lover's last sight of Sevy 'penetrating him as an oar breaks water', a cigar-smoking pianist hitting keys 'as though he detested them all'.

In the apparently wandering novella 'Asylum', which is used as title for this reissue of Higgins's stories, Eddy Brazill is hired by a desperate drunken Englishman. Brazill's poverty of spirit reveals itself as the luck of the Irish survivor. Eddy rises from 'the poor home' to a modicum of stability and sexual satisfaction while his master ends in the asylum. The formal almost Jamesian, crossing of fates is overlaid by obsessions which run through all of the tales: secret death and secret women. An 18th-century female type keeps surfacing in different guises: the intellectual half-whore, half-wife like Madame de Warens, the Marquise du Châtelet and Hesther Vanhomrigh, who is said to have lived in the home where her degenerate avatars the Kervick sisters died. The doomed Englishman has a taste for 'those marvellous ladies'. But eroticism is only one form of secrecy, and even the greatest explicitness masks something else. 'The mind and the gross heart' are temporarily 'appeased ... with a fraction of the truth'.

Higgins always keeps himself present as a stylist and story-teller, but this is a trap. At any moment his marvellous prose may spring another meaning on the reader, or wipe out a prettily drawn character with a sweep of ugly metaphor. As a boy in dead Ireland Brazill was under the illusion that he was alive, catching fish with his father:

> The river that vanished, cut short in mid-stride, the fish deprived of stomachs and heads, both released a steam, an exhalation from scale and surface, of which the ending of life seemed only part.

Higgins's language lives in order to be sure that what it describes stays dead.

In *Winter's Tales 24*, Thomas Disch's 'The Man Who Had No Idea' covers a sweet pill of sentiment with a sci-fi coating, the better to be consumed by moderns. Nice young Barry gets, loses, and gets his Cinderella B. Johnson ('I guess you could say I'm a kind of shoe-freak'). Once the Federal Communications Agency issues them with permanent talking licences, they expect to communicate happily ever after. Shirley Hazzard's 'A Crush on Dr Dance' piles up succinct character descriptions until they begin to conflict with one another. The people keep blindly struggling for power over each other but give away the game. 'The head of Christian's department had a Common Market face. He put his drink down on the Chopin.' After this middle-aged crush object has told his dirty jokes and moved away he had 'left a stain on a nocturne'. Most of the other eight stories in the collection give a surreal twist to their detailed dialogue-laden scenes – or perhaps it is simply that realism in small but intense doses tends to taste unreal.

We should like to correct a printer's error in Helen McNeil's piece last week. The first sentence of the second paragraph should have run: '... for major novelists like Hardy, Meredith and Gissing, as well as for lesser lights like Grant Allen (who got rich on *The Woman Who Did*) ....

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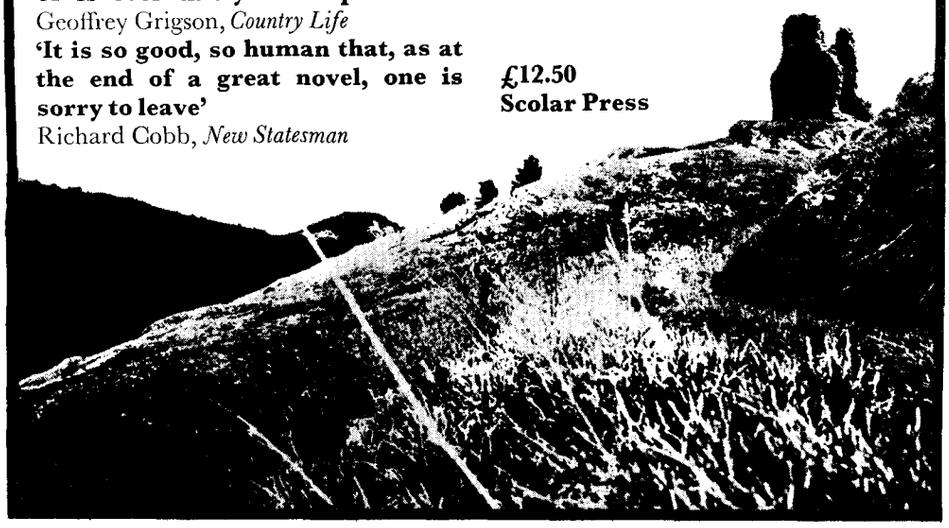

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

John Spurling

Do Not Pass This Point

Neue Sachlichkeit and German Realism of the Twenties *Hayward*
The New Sobriety by JOHN WILLETT *Thames & Hudson* £9.50
Aspekt Grosstadt *Roundhouse*
Berlin: A Critical View: Ugly Realism 20s-70s *ICA*
13°E: Eleven Artists working in Berlin *Whitechapel*

The British, as everybody knows, are an innocent, well-meaning people who have twice this century become embroiled in frightful Continental rows without really knowing why. The Germans, as everybody also knows, are an unstable, corrupted people who have been at the bottom of both rows. It's only to be expected that as part of the current German season in London, *The Seventies Meet the Twenties*, we should be landed with a bitter little art-row from Berlin and be quite unaware of it. More of that anon.

The main exhibition in the season is the remarkable display at the Hayward of the German realist painters of the Weimar period, whose movement is known as *Neue Sachlichkeit* not so much because it is objective in any objective sense as because it was a reaction to the overwrought subjectivity of the Expressionism it displaced. But perhaps this is just the typically British view. What looks to us like an angry, squalid, politically-motivated distortion of the world may simply be life in the Twenties as the cool Germans saw it. They, after all, lost the war, nearly had a communist revolution, went through hyper-inflation and failed to make democracy work. The exhibition, beginning with 14 of the most painfully realistic images of the first world war I have ever seen – etchings by Otto Dix made five years after it was over – puts the British-German question straight from the shoulder: are we too sheltered or are they too hysterical?

Part of the difference, of course, is subject-matter. British art, to this day, is landscape-orientated, with all that implies of space, slowness, calm; even our townscapes are apt to be versions of landscape. The *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters are aggressively urban and – with one or two minor exceptions – more aware of the populace than of their surroundings. The concentration on people makes for a sense of confinement, crowding, haste, pressure and this sense is heightened by the painters' use of drunken perspective, their emphasis on the foreground and their preference for what is grotesque in the human physique over what is ideal.

Max Beckmann's *Self-Portrait in Tuxedo*, for example, which looks quite restrained in this company, is lit so that the boulder-like head is splashed with a mask of shadow and the body, seen from below, seems to bar one's way. All Beckmann's figures have abnormally large heads set on stiff and puppet-like bodies and they are grouped awkwardly and shambolically, as if they didn't fit together but had nowhere else to go. Dix's people are more fluid and at ease with one another, but at the same time more monstrous; he specialises in raddled whores whose flesh has either swollen or shrunk with use, but even his portraits of more respectable sitters contort the bodies, enlarge the hands and introduce lurid colour-effects. Beckmann and Dix are the lions of the show, but the best of the others – Grosz, Schlichter and Hubbuch – reinforce their vision, which is a universal striptease – of the women's bodies and the men's lust and greed. Grosz wrote: 'I tried to convince the world through my work, that it is ugly and sick and dishonest.'

It is hard to reconcile this powerfully negative art with the thesis of John Willett's study of art and politics in the Weimar period, *The New Sobriety*. Willett argues that the culture of the period – which he charts with impressive if necessarily somewhat compressed learning over its whole range (Piscator, the Bauhaus, Eisenstein, Klemperer, Stravinsky, reportage writing and the new photography as well as realist painting) – 'was able to bloom into a civilisation with a coherence and a seeming logic about it that have scarcely been matched since'. At the centre of this international culture was not Paris, as of old, but the Weimar Republic, which, although its own communist revolution had failed, formed with the still un-Stalinised USSR a kind of avant-garde axis, with an unusually wide audience. But Willett runs into difficulties with the chief *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters. He is puzzled that they had no effect on the Bauhaus – the main pillar of his lost civilisation – and finally decides that Dix and Beckmann are not quite sober enough to represent 'the climate of the time'. This is surely too narrow a view. The Weimar culture, Willett concludes, 'was the product of a society which from the start rejected all idea of compromise and by so doing made it directly impossible for National Socialism to be defeated except by war'. If, after the private apocalypses of Expressionism and the in-jokes of Dada, the *Neue Sachlichkeiters* insisted on staring at the monstrosities of the actual world, their mirror-image and the natural reaction to them was the totalitarian sentimentality of Social Realism. 'Such intensification of conflict,' writes Willett, 'the emphasising of differences rather than reconcilation, is for better or worse a very German way of looking at things.'

Too true. The heirs to *Neue Sachlichkeit*, known as the 'Ugly Realists', can be seen at the Roundhouse, in a special exhibition paying homage to Dix's famous triptych *Grosstadt*, and at the ICA together with work by Beckmann, Dix and Grosz. The Ugly Realists, all of the generation born under Hitler, are hysterical and anti-bourgeois to a degree undreamed of by the *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters; nevertheless the ICA exhibition is an official one, chosen by a committee of the Berlin Hochschule der bildende Kunst and handsomely subsidised by the Berlin Senate. The ICA's large, glossy catalogue is unique in my experience, in that it contains essays *critical* of the artists. Meanwhile at the Whitechapel there is a rival show, subsidised by other official German bodies and chosen by Christos M. Joachimides, who has often selected Senate-supported shows in the past but on this occasion was ousted from the Hochschule's committee by the new President, a left-wing politician. Most of Joachimides' artists, contemporaries of the Ugly Realists but working in various international avant-garde styles, are heirs – such is the roundabout of history – to *Neue Sachlichkeit's* predecessors, Dada and Expressionism. Nicholas Serota, the director of the Whitechapel, complains (in another substantial catalogue) that his show was the original one and was displaced by a 'change of power, and of political persuasion' at the Hochschule. The quarrel, however, cannot be quite that simple, since all the artists are equally concerned to be radical and there is the further complication that the realists themselves are at odds. Four were to have been included in both shows but asked, according to Serota, to be withdrawn from the ICA. One of these, Johannes Grützke, was included nonetheless, since his paintings are owned by other people, and in the event he is the only artist who appears at both the ICA and the Whitechapel. What Serota fails to mention is that Grützke demanded to be withdrawn from *both* shows.

All this may leave the innocent British visitor longing for his landscapes; but, although there is not much to detain him at the Whitechapel, the ICA and Roundhouse artists cannot be shrugged off. Here, like it or not, is the nightmare edge of our own sheltered world – the view from a city whose surrounding landscape is politically inaccessible. 'End of British Sector Do Not Pass This Point', says the notice. We perhaps need reminding that this time we're inextricably involved with these violently disgusted people.

Television

Julian Barnes

Culture Schlock

It can only be a matter of days now before Richard Baker, smartly dressed in sage, dun or sedge, leans pouchily forward and advises us, with his serious RNVR bonhomie, that 'Turkeys are to cost more this Christmas'. It will be an accurate and safe description of a true fact; but it won't be an exciting moment in British television. A week ago, randomly sampling the maligned American tube in a New Mexico motel, I caught a newscaster – draped in tartan as if he'd been wallpapered – putting it a bit more inventively. 'That Thanksgiving bird', he warned enthusiastically, 'will gobble up more of your long green this year.' You may not be able to take that sort of colouring all the time, but a few months of Angela Rippon's plodding texts and schoolmarm delivery (one of the chief functions of Brian Walden, it always seems to me, is to

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make her appear a speed-reader) turns American news into poetry.

We ritually permit foreigners to body-rub us with the assurance that British television is the finest in the world. But the fact that we sell the Americans *Civilisation* and they sell us *Starsky and Hutch* tells us as much about the buyers as the vendors. There's a thin upper band of programmes almost entirely missing from American TV: plays, documentaries, think series – the sort of shows whose culture-shock has to be buffered for trans-atlantic viewers by a two-minute introduction from Alistair Cooke. Yet below this minority-interest level, where the main social function of a programme is simply to keep the viewer from getting mixed up in organised crime, any notion of cisatlantic superiority is a delusion. The best weekly comedy series on British TV at the moment is *Soap*; the best drama-doc of recent months has been the repeat of *Washington Behind Closed Doors*; nothing in crime since early *Z Cars* and *Softly, Softly* has touched the first few score episodes of *Kojak*; while the thrilling coverage of American football (with half a dozen cameras, some of them picking up individual running backs) makes one start at an unfollowed touch-kick at Twickenham.

Timidly reacclimatising myself with *Bruce Forsyth's Big Night* (LWT), I was struck by how much our family game-shows lack the courage of their vulgarity. Here, the contestants look embarrassed at being on telly with members of their own side, as if the family dandruff secret is about to be revealed to the world; in America, they fight in tough, well-manicured, exhibitionist packs, punching the air at successes, hollering encouragement to one another, and jumping up and down at the slightest hi-fi centre or power mixer: a newly-married couple I watched pocket a fridge-freezer big enough to store four Howard Hugheses had to be pulled off each other, so vigorous was the manifestation of their satisfied acquisitiveness. Here, contestants are cowed by the damp flap of Nicholas Parsons's tongue; there, they snap back at comperial cheek. Here, Brucie kindly tips the pointer on the Bashometer up to the level of whatever it is his competitors want (thereby reinforcing our good opinion of him); there, families are made to play hard, and comperes sagely gloat when a vision of wall-to-wall consumer goods is viciously dashed by some trifling ignorance over the capital of Iceland.

It's not just the newsreaders and Brucie who seem duller after three weeks of Yankee tube. The *Radio Times* has mysteriously come over all grey. The much-loved Grousers' Slot on *Word for Word* (BBC-2) has gone occasional (confirming my belief that there are really only about six Grousers out there, adding about one word a year to their hit list), while Vicky Payne's slice of the action seems to have been cut down, presumably on humanitarian grounds. The great LWT football coup promises to halve the delight of television from next October. Other shows have also done furtive shifts: Brucie has moved to 6.00 'so that the kids can watch' (not that this lightened his opening five minutes of sexual innuendo) – which must be an admission of some kind of failure; and *The South Bank Show* (having gamely opposed *Match of the Day* last season) has wisely transferred to Sunday night – from which slot Melv will be in a position to cream Melv-substitute Ronnie Harwood in the ratings.

Belatedly checking out the new prestige series designed to gobble up the foreign long green produced some surprises. *Edward and Mrs Simpson* (Thames) looked certain to be a solid export number; but from the episode I watched Simon Raven seems to have surrendered to pastiche. Canary v-necked pullovers define the age, Edward Fox's vowels are strangely peripatetic, and the background music is plonk-and-strum banjo stuff: you half expect John Alderton and Ian Carmichael, and probably the late Dennis Price as well, to stroll on. By contrast, Jonathan Miller's *The Body in Question* (BBC-2), which to judge by other critics sounded close to satire – with the good doctor gumbooting through human lights and toying with pancake-sized livers – turned out to be almost entirely straight. Well, almost; and the qualification is doubtless accentuated by sly scheduling which places *TBIQ* directly after *Monty Python*.

This week, for instance, Miller began with a rococo and extremely manual explanation of the conceptual difference between eating and breathing: after a couple of minutes of front-man's display, including a comical demonstration of 'other uses of the lungs' (that unserious Miller proboscis lowered itself over a piece of Bolivian brick wall, and the lips solemnly blew a cloud of Bolivian dust into the air), it transpired that the main difference is that while we can see what we eat, we can't see what we breathe. Still, if Miller is at times prone to Pykery – the art of saying simple things in the most complicated way available – he also possesses the rarer gift of making complicated things simple; it's an endearing sight as he tussles both with his subject and with the warring instincts within himself. But when we got to it, his account of successive theories of the functioning of the lungs was lucid and usefully illustrated: not least in a closing sequence where Miller – having earlier declined to sacrifice a mouse to gratify viewers' sado-voyeurism – rendered himself practically unconscious by cutting out his own carbon dioxide warning system. Laying down your consciousness for the instruction of the viewer: it's an example some other presenters should be encouraged to follow.

Sport

Russell Davies

High Priests

It is the season when Frank Bough (and hasn't he lost weight?) exhorts us to fill in our forms and vote for the TV Sports Personality of the Year. Shall it be Frank himself, such a gallant, if gradual, loser of his fight to maintain some footing in the soccer part of his Grandstand show? Shall it be Tony Gubba, whose reading of the teleprinter results suggests not only that he's never heard of half the towns in the

Craig Raine

In the Kalahari Desert

The sun rose like a tarnished
looking glass to catch the sun

and flash His hot message
at the missionaries below –

Isabella and the Rev. Roger Price,
and the Helmores with a broken axle

left, two days behind, at Fever Ponds.
The wilderness was full of home:

a glinting beetle on its back
struggled like an orchestra

with Beethoven. The Hallé,
Isabella thought and hummed.

Makololo, their Zulu guide,
puzzled out the Bible, replacing

words he didn't know with Manchester.
Spikenard, alabaster, Leviticus,

were Manchester and Manchester.
His head reminded Mrs Price

of her old pomander stuck with cloves,
forgotten in some pungent tallboy.

The dogs drank under the wagon
with a far away clip-clopping sound,

and Roger spat into the fire,
leaned back and watched his phlegm

like a Welsh rarebit
bubbling on the brands . . .

When Baby died, they sewed her
in a scrap of carpet and prayed,

with milk still darkening
Isabella's grubby button-through.

Makololo was sick next day
and still the Helmores didn't come.

The outspanned oxen moved away
at night in search of water,

were caught and goaded on
to Matabele water hole –

nothing but a dark stain on the sand.
Makololo drank vinegar and died.

Back they turned for Fever Ponds
and found the Helmores on the way . . .

Until they got within a hundred yards,
the vultures bobbed and trampolined

around the bodies, then swirled
a mile above their heads

like scalded tea leaves.
The Prices buried everything –

all the tattered clothes and flesh,
Mrs Helmore's bright chains of hair,

were wrapped in bits of calico
then given to the sliding sand.

'In the beginning was the Word' –
Roger read from Helmore's Bible

found open at St John.
Isabella moved her lips,

'The Word was Manchester.'
Shhh, shhh, the shovel said. Shhh . . .

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British Isles, but also that he couldn't be relied on to pronounce some of the ones he's actually lived in? Or you may go for Dickie Davies, who, having been characterised some months ago (by Richard Ingrams at his acutest) as 'the Mexican hairdresser', has done absolutely nothing to freshen up his poodled roué image – indeed, has slipped further into the habit of announcing Big Daddy, Les Kellett and (say) the Salt Lake City Basketball Stars' Unicycle Pancake Race in a bored, parroting, anaesthetic gobble which is all too depressingly what these manifestations deserve. And don't forget that plucky little horse, Jimmy Hill. He tried several times to laugh last Saturday night, did Jimmy, but – nyah nyah, GULP – it just wouldn't come. He looked far more convincing when thanking us, shock-faced, for our many floral tributes to *Match of the Day*. Thoughtfully, all the Manchester City players in the featured match turned out with fat black armbands.

Is there such a thing as a Sports Personality? Certainly there are sportsmen whose personality one has seen gradually poking more and more insistently through their ageing muscle walls until – whoosh! – the old skin is suddenly sloughed off and a gaudy new Celebrity Moth takes to the air. Of those the candle has yet to claim, Henry Cooper has the most impressive wing-span (smells nice, too), though in the round, furry, lovably buzzing category, Gareth Edwards has already made some very active first appearances.

But in their playing days, sportsmen in fact have rather intermittent and, from sport to sport, widely varying opportunities to state, via their musculature, who they are. We do often catch snatches of their speech nowadays, but on the whole I think it's healthier for the strong personalities in sport to have the barrier of muteness to push against. Nothing kills off a player's sense of proportion more quickly – or his audience's affection for him more thoroughly – than the opportunity to 'make his presence felt' in an, as it were, civilian manner during play. Look at Ilie Nastase, whose presence on the court now inspires not a fraction of the wonderment or (even) mystery it once did. What so many spectators despise Nastase for is not his 'antics' in themselves, but for demonstrating to them that grace and delicacy and bodily control can perfectly well be an expression of a personality in part manifestly graceless, to a large extent humourless (hence Nastase's famous 'sense of humour'), and above all lacking in a sense of the occasion to which he is centrally contributing.

To insist on this past point, admittedly, would be an old-fashioned thing to do. Competitors are now expected to worry about themselves, or at the very most their opponents. They are not much encouraged to see themselves in a priestly-celebrity role at a public rite, and I doubt if they ever were (although I always wonder when I see a gilt-gowned boxer genuflect his way through the ropes looking for all the world like a bishop). Nevertheless, there are still sportsmen who are overcome by the responsibility the big occasion throws on them; and I think the public retains a specially affectionate respect for the kind of performer who gives the impression that his dignity and the competition stand in a mutually beneficial relationship. If I am right, there will be those who have their misgivings about, for example, Steve Ovett's victory wave in the last 50 yards – not because he isn't fully entitled to one, but because in the act of granting himself that premature chance to communicate his satisfaction, he must to some extent pre-empt and undercut whatever we, the audience, can contribute by way of gratitude and praise. The event becomes that much less serious, automatically, the moment Ovett steps outside it and plays two roles at once. It is as if a vestige of the priestly function lingered on here, and the Rev. Ovett had started to eat a banana during his Harvest Sermon. (Mind you, it's a long time since I heard a Harvest Sermon. I dare say a good many revs eat victory bananas in the pulpit, doubtless while playing the guitar at the same time.)

Among sportsmen who wear their 'personality' just a touch ostentatiously I would number young Botham (the day he puts this right will be the day he finds he can disguise his bouncer); and – I have to chide a fellow Welshman now and again – J. P. R. Williams. There is some excuse for Williams, since any player who lives week by week with the probability of having his surface anatomy rearranged is entitled to his small vanities; but just the same, I'd like to see him play through one game with his socks up, especially if it would encourage him to trot back into position in a way that didn't suggest he was mentally watching a replay of himself on TV.

If I ask myself (and it's too late to stop me) who conforms ideally to what is certainly an unfashionable and non-sponsor-attracting notion of a Sports Personality, I don't find it easy to answer. The person I named, in any case, would immediately be revealed as bagman in one of the latest scandals: the Tommy Docherty Perjury Possibility; the Case of the Receptive Ref; the Geoff Boycott Round-the-World Slanging Match. But for the capacity to enliven a dull game, to bring a sleepy public to life; for bouts of furious, violent athleticism channelled through control, and interspersed with spells of amusingly haughty impassivity; for taking the whole thing as seriously as his spectators want him to, but not a touch of anguish more – I think it would be hard, at present, to beat the cricketer Viv Richards. He can be seen exclusively, by the way, on BBC Television. (What price *Catch of the Day* on Saturday nights next summer?)

Architecture

Andrew Saint

White Sound

Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia

'Flexibility' is the grand totem of today's avant-garde architecture. Where internal walls are fixed and services too specifically positioned, the theory runs, a structure soon becomes obsolete. Better instead to house all technology in a building's outer 'skin', make it available everywhere within, and then, using a modular system, simply slot into place whatever partitioning may temporarily be needed. This approach naturally suits factories and offices, where open space is acceptable and frequent change may be expected. But often the ideal of flexibility allows architects to disregard the precision of real needs and substitute solutions of frustrating rigidity.

A case in point is Foster Associates' prestigious Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia, opened with a flourish last April. Given together with a superb collection by a single magnifico, Sir Robert Sainsbury, this lavish, up-to-the-minute building has attracted speedy plaudits (including a recent RIBA award) but, so far, little close scrutiny. Superficially it is from the same stable as the Centre Beaubourg, its chief architect Norman Foster having for a time worked with Richard Rogers of the 'Pompidolium'. Both buildings mix exhibition space with other requirements, both claim the virtues of flexibility, and both kow-tow before another modish concept – that services are in some sense 'fun', and should therefore be seen and heard.

There similarities end, for Foster's building is a much sleeker and more subdued performance than the Beaubourg. Covertly classical in its aesthetic, it masquerades almost as an isolated temple in an English country park, hogging the best elevation on the UEA campus and showing scant courtesy in either siting or materials towards Denys Lasdun's neighbouring jungle of buildings, to which it is joined by an arbitrary and tiresome little gangway. As a mere art-object or shrine the exterior, a very long-drawn-out single-storey hangar, succeeds admirably. Great glass panels stretch from floor to roof at the ends, while moulded plates of aluminium run the whole length along top and sides, with doors, ducts and windows quite casually obtruding as present need requires.

Yet more stylish are the broad open spaces of the interior, especially in the half of the building given over to the gallery. Delicately lit from above through a mesh of filters and blinds that murmur and move automatically as the sky above alters, here is a soothing, blue-grey haven of repose fit for the contemplation of art, far removed, as Sir Robert himself hoped, from the disruption of insistent demands for 'changing the nature of our society'. Here, amid a presentation of select masterpieces offered purely as 'experience', you may lounge in an easy chair, thumb through *Apollo*, and be lulled out of activism to the hum of 'white sound' and the susurration of a thousand slats folding gently back above.

Were the Sainsbury Centre confined to this gallery, its success would be complete. Though old-fashioned in its arrangement and more rigid than at first appears, as a feast for greedy eyes it excels. But over the rest of the building Foster seems definitely to have come unstuck. At an early stage it was agreed to house the university's art historians and, less logically, the senior common room in the building. So as to maintain his sensational end-to-end space, Foster first wanted to do without barriers or enclosures; everything was to be flexible and at the same level, with academics wandering casually into the gallery and holding forth in corners as the mood took them. Eventually reality intruded in the shape of two broad, open-topped podia, thrown quite close together across the full width of the building and rising to nearly half its height. These segregate the academics from the gallery and can in theory be dismantled, but probably never will be.

The effect of these bulky interruptions is to break brutally into Foster's open vista without

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satisfying the academics' need for enclosed space. With one designated as a lecture theatre for the art historians, the other as the main social area of the senior common room, a speaker's words were often lost in the clinking of teacups or the droning of the dons' TV on the rival podium. Underneath, the lecturers and gallery staff huddle in ill-lit offices beset with minor irritations. One is worth instancing. In the interests of 'design', the office doors are wholly of glass; the locks are not on them but on the ground in front, and can only be operated by kneeling down and fiddling on the floor. One eminent but obstinate Herr Doktor persists, despite a bad back, in keeping his keys attached to his person on a chain and may often be seen grovelling contortedly around in the attempt to enter his room.

New buildings all have minor practical faults, so it is ungenerous to dwell on trivia. But some of the Sainsbury Centre's failings are not going to be easily solved. The art historians must somehow be found a new lecture room, while on the opposite podium the dons have voted to move out and seek more commodious accommodation elsewhere. Had Foster been designing a Sainsbury supermarket, he would have been far less indulged for his 'sacrifices to art' in plain disregard of day-to-day efficiency. Of course it is possible to lay such flaws at the door of particular compromises. But the gospel of flexibility, which allows architects to cling to an overall conception and hope that in time their clients' preciser needs will change, has much to answer for. Had UEA's requirements enjoyed equal weight in Foster's mind with Sir Robert's vision, the Sainsbury Centre might have been a true masterpiece. Instead, we are left once again with a magnificent-looking building whose functional efficiency, for all the fol-de-rol about technology, is merely mediocre.

Films

John Coleman

Angsts and After

Germany in Autumn (X) *Scala*
Hitler – A Career (A) *Classic, Oxford Street*
Piranha (X) *Classic, Oxford Street; Centa; Scene; and general release*
Carry On Emmanuelle (AA) *Studio; Scene*

We all, I take it, know that Hitler was one of the dirtiest men in the history of the world. Since then, we have taken a pace forward in mankind's progress towards lousiness. Being lousy is not necessarily separate from an awareness of the condition – may, even, be accompanied by a generally self-defeating sense of guilt. The Germans, whom Hitler created and who were all too evidently there to become his creations (both smaller and larger available versions of us), are currently going through the motions of second thoughts. The outcomes may give us pause also.

Germany in Autumn is not half bad – roughly, three-quarters. It is an assembly job, with a lot of names shooting short items around the event of last fall's snatch of Herr Schleyer, the business of terrorism, the bemuddled activity of having qualms about degrees of decency: and sheerly not giving a damn for a human life. It is not my wish to sound anti-German, but my recent experiences in the cinema have made it a bit hard not to. Fassbinder, one of the team who contributed to *Germany in Autumn*, displays himself mostly unclothed, being beastly both to his boyfriend and his mother. Other entrants in this interesting hybrid, somewhere between *Loin de Vietnam* (and some of us recall just how far that was from the facts) and *Pieces of Eight* (of which this could be read as a kind of running, jumping and stomping version of another sort of games), do better. There may be a manner of sick-bravery, auto-exposure in the Fassbinder matter. There is certainly an ironic brilliance in the late episode which has a TV-made rendition of Sophocles' *Antigone* solemnly debated by a pre-judging panel – shall we show it, given the political climate? – which almost justifies the long, long, extremely selves-indulgent olio of angsts and after. Do we need it?

Same question of *Hitler – A Career*, Joachim Fest's 155-minute compilation of the pathological hun's movements towards and arrival at power: as a hurt-to-my-gut paid witness to the horrors of Nazism – and one has seen a few documentaries about this by now – I found little fresh in Herr Fest's lengthy (as you might say) home-movie. The rallies, immensely orchestrated; the blonde-pigtailed *Mädchen*; even the Eva Braun candid-camera footage have been displayed before. What is new here is a certain eerie blandness, a coolness about what happened to all those Jews. Fest has done his archive work, no quarrel there. It is what he has rather pacifically done *with* it that surprises. True, one will not lightly forget a terrible, teaching moment of history: a line of Germans being made to see the results of those camps, the human results – elders cried, some youngsters looked very relaxed, to put it mildly. But these two teutonic testimonies, about which it is easy – as I intimated earlier – to be glib, ought to be viewed and reviewed. Dirty work, if not in these massive proportions, goes on on crossroads everywhere.

To come to littler fish, *Piranha* lends itself to something between a highly modified giggle and a straightforward ecchh! I received through the post a flat thing, which – upon being opened – sprang into a cube. This is my most exciting news about *Piranha*, except for the fact that it is your actual mini-*Jaws*. Its big, nasty scene is on a beach and reasonably choreographed. What plot it has bears on some fishies trained to do harm to the North Vietnamese: something like that. They are then, for reasons known alone to box-office, transferred to the good old USA and lent some message about pollution, moral rottenness and assorted vices. Bless their weeny teeth. There are three funny, send-up lines, but they were always too late.

Carry On Emmanuelle is the 30th item in a series that has made British cinema what it is today. Would you settle for mud? 'You can have Tom, Dick or Harry,' proposes a gent (could it have been dear Kenneth Williams, incredibly miscast as ze Frainch ambassador over here?). An actress, who is mostly unclothed (which seems a profoundly sounc notion – her name is Suzanne Danielle, anc she is the eponymous heroine and wife of the ambassador), ripostes, 'I don't want Tom o Harry'. The script is ascribed to Lance Peters which sounds like a career he might thinl about as an alternative to toying with words.

The London Film Festival – and an ingeni ous and crafted Australian entry, Phil Noyce' *Newsfront*, now moved to the Screen on the Hill (and to be discussed next week) – has hac a higher percentage of English-language speaking films this year than I recollect a being the case in previous years. Is this a trend? If so, who cares? Let me simply say that Orson Welles's finely, naughty, rich anc forty talking about his *Othello* ought to bc acquired, as should – I think – Andrze Wajda's *A Man of Marble*, appallingly toc fatty at 165 minutes but possibly the bes thing he has accomplished in years – and, fo sure, the most hazardous, an affair of a hare girl making her diploma film about a work hero, a Polish stakhanovite, and finding th truth to be even harder.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Stay Single

Comings and Goings *Hampstead*
Family Circles *Orange Tree*
Mori El Merma *Riverside*
Look Out – Here Comes Trouble *Warehous*

Incompatibility is the subject that links the s comedies of Mike Stott, that sociologist of th bedroom, and the sombre drolleries of Ala Ayckbourn, the suburban anthropologist. we're to judge by *Comings and Goings* an *Family Circles*, not to mention each author earlier field-research, neither of them believe that one plus one can add up to anythir except self-deception, misunderstandin frustration, exasperation, even desperation: short, a mathematics of muddling through. A a Stott surrogate helplessly wails:

> Why can't we all be much more loving with ea other? And honest with each other? Well, I knc it wouldn't work – but why not?

Why not, indeed. The trouble is that Jan h reacted to John's affair with his secretary l locking herself in the bathroom, where sl discovers she doesn't love him anyway; tl benign and sensible Jimmy, who actually ow the house in which this matrimonial wranglii happens, has been deserted by his fickle fla mate, Vernon; and Hilary from upstairs h got her grappling hooks into Malcolm, wl claims to be happily married but confesses his cups that 'there's not much betwe Caroline and me that can't be said in publi All this, and more, and in some cases worse, or around that somewhat speciously evocati feast, Christmas.

Sad stuff; but there are plenty of tim when we're reminded that *Comings a Goings* springs from the same typewriter th rattled off *Funny Peculiar*. Stott's prime su cess is Malcolm, who is in industrial counte espionage and glumly advertises himself as

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sort of married James Bond with a mortgage'. Paul Jesson plays him as a fruitjuice drinker cut loose in a distillery, and has a good deal of fun both with his plodding glee at being acclaimed a 'stud' and with his bleary dismay at being, as he sees it, over-enthusiastically humped by someone twice his size. It is a pity that the play's prime weakness should be precisely this burly-buttocked lady predator, with her hockey-field bonhomie. Lindsay Duncan is, as she presumably must be, mainly gulp and gasp, and can do little to prevent herself being reduced to gallumphing caricature by a vocabulary that consists of 'gosh', 'golly', 'chin up', 'cripes', and a girlish 'I mean, ooomph and so on', meant to express delight at what turns out to be her first-ever orgasm. Stott's special gift is his keen yet kindly eye for the odder symptoms produced in people by that desirable disease, their sexuality, and for the best part of the play its focus is controlled, exact. He has no need to go about goosing the audience with a tickling-stick.

Family Circles, zestfully produced by Sam Walters on the Richmond fringe, is an extremely interesting addition to the Ayckbourn archives; but one can see why the West End impresarios might shy away even from what is, it seems, its third and final version. Two daughters bring their husbands, and the third her latest lay, to celebrate the wedding anniversary of their parents, who may and may not be trying to murder one another. It is a party whose spirit-level may be gauged, not only by this grisly suspicion, but by the father's first-act remark that 'whoever you choose to share the rest of your life, it invariably turns out to be the worst choice you ever made'. And this, in fact, is the proposition that Ayckbourn then proceeds to test. The visitors arrive, take an awkward tea together, go out to a spectacularly unsuccessful dinner, then return home; and each girl spends the time attached to one after the other of the three men. Technically, the piece is as taxing as anything yet attempted by an author well known for his jigsaw mind and acrostic artefacts. Emotionally, it is bleaker than any of his plays except *Just Between Ourselves*, and no less cynical about the domestic dovecote, the mock-Tudor love-nest. Once again, Ayckbourn is taking risks not easily reconciled with popular comedy.

To a large extent, the canny observation and funny encounters justify those risks. As Ayckbourn sees it, the ugly sisters change awesomely little, whoever their partners may be. But one husband, resilient enough when he's married to the most bloody-minded, sinks into apathetic hypochondria when he moves on to the earnest, flustered one. Another, who flaunts a seedy grandeur when this fusspot is his wife, visibly coarsens when he's with the family flibbertygibbet and actually becomes violent when he's taken over by the commuter-belt Regan. This is revealing and instructive as far as it goes. The trouble is that we've hardly got a bearing on any relationship before it has flashed past, and in the fourth and last act the compass is snatched from our collective hands and sent spinning from north to south and back again. The characters bustle on and off, more often than not married to a different person, and the effect is frantic, giddy, and disorientating, not a mental state in which laughter can be easily generated. *Family Circles* is a good idea that ends with its wits turned by its own bravura.

Those who usually resist emblematic drama from alien companies should have no anxieties about La Claca's *Mori El Merma*, Spanish for 'death to the bogeyman'. It is an orgy of contempt and exotic disgust, populated by rubbery, rolling grotesques, one a cross between a maggot and a tiger, another between a beetle and a tomato, others even more bizarrely begotten, and all grunting, chirruping and squawking in moronic obeisance to a bulb-eyed, cigar-nosed tyrant, a Mediterranean Père Ubu, who eventually dies and turns out to be an empty assembly of gaudy linen. The meaning is rarely in doubt, whether repression, torture, or the emergence of a new, freer Catalonia is being mimed; the masks and coils, the vast, misshapen feet, everything, come from no less resourceful a brush than that of Jean Miro; and the result, quite simply, is riveting.

Here Comes Trouble is Mary O'Malley's foot-in-the-door report from a mental hospital, a sprawling, atmospheric, amusing and not very demanding concoction, somewhat akin to her *Once a Catholic*. She has been accused of lacking an over-riding idea; and if one compares this play with Peter Nichols's *National Health*, which took a more obviously critical view of the welfare state in practice, it may seem to want both coherence and bite. Nevertheless, some generalisations may be inferred from that random gossiping over hot milk and even more desultory exchanges in the doctor's office: the probability that many patients' troubles are outer, not inner, whether they're a nagging wife, a domineering mum, or slum housing; the helplessness of medicine confronted with essentially social problems, summed up by a shrink whose only resource is to incant, 'I haven't a magic wand' and prescribe yet more valium; and, more unusually, the interest of the inmates in astrology and fortune-telling, symptom of a reliance on fate, chance, luck, rather than the power of free-will. And John Caird directs Jane Carr, Gaye Brown, Maxine Audley *et al.* with spirit and sensitivity.

Weekend Competition

No 2543 **Set by A. Boteman**

The only known poem by the new Oxford Professor of Poetry is a rather louche limerick. So let's not be snooty: rework any major poem in English – from *The Waste Land* to *The Prelude* – into the form of a limerick. Maximum two tries each; by Tuesday 12th December – so haul ass.

Result of No 2540 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

We asked for gruesome one-liners after the manner of the famous 'Salome Dear, Not in the Fridge', which provided the title of the last Weekend Competition anthology.

Report **by Canny Lonie**

As Terry Towling pointed out, there is a well-established line of bad-taste cracks deriving from 'Apart from that, what did you think of the *play*, Mrs Lincoln?' Many of your versions of this, relating to a more recent assassination, were about as tasteless as *The Greek Tycoon* and half as witty. Nor did we go much for your references to gas bills and lampshades. A quid a quip, and count yourselves lucky.

Will that be a single or return, Mrs Karenina?
And double-top to finish, Sebastian.
You have to hand it to him, Harold, it was a bloody good shot.

BILL GREENWELL

How about selling me your binoculars, now, Oedipus?
Don't cut him down, Mrs Iscariot – it's garrison pike-practice, tonight.
A couple of pies – and no collar studs, if you please, Mr Tod.

PASCOE POLGLAZE

Now you'll be able to wear my Levis, Abelard.
Tasty, but not how I wanted your daughter's hand, Idi.

DENIS O'DONOGHUE

What is the secret of your gorgeous pot of Basil?

GEORGE MOOR

Coming swan-upping, Leda?
Haven't seen Lizzie Borden's scatterbrained parents lately.

GERRY HAMILL

That's right, Ms Duncan, you wear the scarf once and we'll give you a lifetime of free advertising!

RICHARD LLEWELLYN

OK Ernest, so you *can* pick up the gun in your teeth.
You'd better do that outside the tent, Oates.

HUMPHREY EVANS

I've just cleaned that carpet, Onan.

TED THOMPSON

Wriggle, Byng, you won't encourage anybody just dangling there.
That Joan's a nice bit of crackling, eh?

W. S. BROWNLIE

Don't comb your hair at table, Medusa.

ROD WOODSTOCK

At least I can come off the pill now, Abelard.
You must send me the recipe, Lucretia.

BARRY ANTHONY

I get the impression you're only half-listening, Vincent.

FRANK MACKENZIE

Very reasonable, this salt, Mr Lot.
You can get an eyeful of the Normans from here, Harold.

J. TIMSON

It's about this nappy glut in Galilee, Your Majesty

PETER PETERSON

I know I said I felt like a horse's ass, Godfather . . .

ROY KELLY

Of course, it *would* have to be his clean-toga morning.
This is the way we do it, Private Balbus – drilling two feet with one nail.

ROBIN RAVENSBOURNE

An unassuming little malmsey, with a fine body . . .

V. F. CORLEONE

What are your impressions of Gaza, Samson?

JEAN PASTOR

Not tonight, Heloise.

ROBERT SAVORY

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Tony Miles

Chess

No 110 **Under 26 Championship**

The newly instituted World Under 26 Team Championship (replacing the oft abused 'Student' Olympiad) held in Mexico City produced the greatest ever success for a British team. The English squad of Jonathans Mestel & Speelman, Shawn Taulbut, David Goodman and Jonathan Kinlay scored a superb victory. In the finals they won every match and finished with 26½/36, ahead of strong sides from USSR 25½. Cuba 24½ and USA 22½ — all of whom included Grandmasters in their teams.

Their success was due simply to every team member hitting his best form at just the right time. Indeed, the timing could scarcely have been better. In their preliminary group they finished a poor second, only just qualifying ahead of Dominica, and losing the final match 1-3 to Colombia. This time they played Colombia in the first round and won 3½-½!

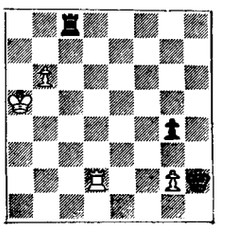
The last round began with England half a point ahead of the USSR and one point ahead of Cuba, with the pairings set for a grand finale, England v Cuba and USSR v USA. England completed a fine tournament with a 2½-1½ victory, while the Russians only managed to draw. The real highlight though was undoubtedly the 3-1 win over the USSR.

White: S Taulbut **Black: S Mikhalchishin**

1.P-K4, P-K4; 2.N-KB3, N-QB3; 3.B-N5, P-QR3; 4.B-R4, N-B3; 5.0-0, B-K2; 6.R-K1, P-Q3; 7.BxNch, PxB; 8.P-Q4, PxP; 9.NxP, B-Q2; 10.N-QB3, 0-0; 11.Q-B3, R-N1; 12.R-N1, R-N3? An ungainly move. 12. . . . R-K1 or . . . P-B4 would have been better. **13.P-KR3, P-N3; 14.N-N3, N-R4;** Black's last few moves are very hard to explain. **15.B-K3, R-N1; 16.P-K5!** and now he is made to pay for them. **16. . . .PxP; 17.B-R6, R-K1; 18.RxP; N-N2; 19.R-Q1.** With the White major pieces dominating the centre and his weakened kingside, Black is already lost. **19. . . . N-K3; 20.N-K4, R-N4; 21.RxN!** Inevitable but no less elegant for that. **21. . . . PxR; 22.Q-B3, P-K4; 23.Q-B4ch, K-R1; 24.Q-B7, R-KN1; 25.N-B6, BxN; 26.RxB, QxR; 27.QxQ Resigns.**

Problem 110

Black to play. Does he have any chance to save the game? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 13 December.

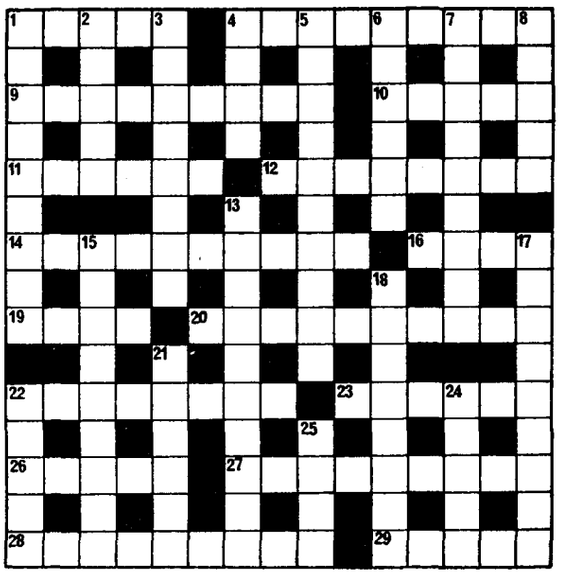


Solution to Problem 108

Black wins by 1 . . . RxN! 2.Q-B1! R-B1! 3.RxQ, NxR; 4.K-R1, (else R-B8!) N-K7! Resigns.

Weekend Crossword 1284

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1284, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 12 December.



ACROSS

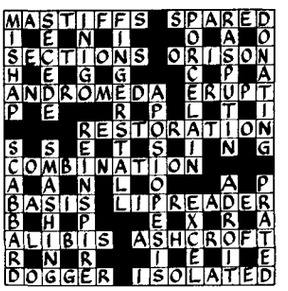
1 Involving third power (5)
4 Find a face changes when about to be married (9)
9 Possibly not in same state (9)
10 Love to study an ancient language (5)
11 Slowly making a woman leave without one (6)
12 Town after a new life which brings happiness (8)
14 The place to begin on the South Coast? (5,5)
16 In age she would be mean (4)
19 Penny added to total in a depression (4)
20 Where everything about one is in poetry (10)
22 Song which makes one crazy with a girl going crazy (8)
23 Position of arms shows I am born OK (6)
26 Governed by Labour, without the other main parties? (5)
27 In a version of mad epic he is arraigned (9)
28 Deceives admiral with optical signals (9)
29 'My life is one dem'd horrid ——' said Mr Mantalini (5)

DOWN

1 Some have legs and others powers of attraction (9)
2 Hastings has the leading group (5)
3 This cove is hidden in the hills (8)
4 Mad but I'm all right (4)
5 The fair resent being corrupted to seek fellowship (10)
6 One who is handsome and is crazy about love (6)
7 Dye-stuff made of combustible material found outside a ravine (9)
8 Dim component of leading young conservative (5)
13 A communist back in action shows restraint (10)
15 Provide weapons over trouble about sick animal (9)
17 Bad second hidden and stolen away (9)
18 Naval action around a part of China (8)
21 If a party left this opening there would be victory over the west (6)
22 Town for a parade (5)
24 Muslim leader a relative hid in obscurity (5)
25 Work which sounds like an address to the cat (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1283



Prizewinners to No 1283

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Dorothy Hart (Hull)
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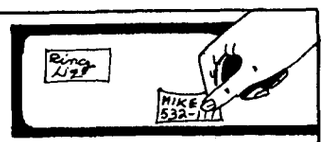

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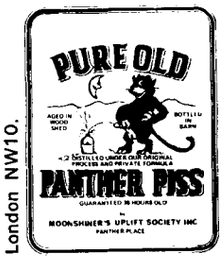

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Vol. 96 No. 2489

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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE (Royal Shakespeare Company) 836 6404. Info 836 5332. Middleton & Rowley's 'The Changeling', 'As You Like It'. Final perfs David Mercer's 'Cousin Vladimir'. See daily press for dates and times. RSC also at The Warehouse in Mary O'Malley's 'Look Out . . . Here Comes Trouble', final perfs Pete Atkin's 'A & R' and Peter Flannery's 'Savage Amusement'.

HAMPSTEAD THEATRE 722 9301. 'Comings & Goings' by Mike Stott directed by Alan Dossor. Mons.-Fris. 8 Sats 5 & 8.

NATIONAL THEATRE, 928 2252. 'The Double Dealer', 'Strife', 'The Philanderer', 'Betrayal', 'Plunder', 'The World Turned Upside Down' (perhaps not suitable for children). 'Has "Washington" Legs?' See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 928 2256.

ROYAL COURT, 730 1745. Last perfs tonight and tomorrow 'Prayer for My Daughter'. 8 p.m. Prevs 6 and 7 Dec. at 8, open 8 Dec. at 7 'Wheelchair Willie' by Alan Brown.

ARTS THEATRE. 836 3334

Worth queuing for from breakfast time, Financial Times.

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SCREEN ON THE HILL 435 3366 (opp. Belsize Park Tube). Visconti's 'Ludwig'. (AA). Progs at 3.30, 6.00, 8.45.

Poetry

FAME IS THE SPUR! Poet seeks financial help in publishing second book 'Lucid Intervals' with preface by Sir John Betjeman. John Lovelace-Street, Stillitron Language Centre, 79a Eastbank Street, Southport, Merseyside. Phone 0704 38925.

Meetings

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MICHEL TOURNIER, novelist, will give a lecture on 'Un romancier parle de son métier' on Tuesday, 5 December at 6.15 p.m. at the French Institute, Queensberry Place, London SW7. Tel: 01-589 6211 ext. 38. Admission free.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 30th Anniversary Declaration of Human Rights Sunday, 10 Dec., 2 p.m. Horseguards Ave. March to Reformers Tree, Speakers Corner, Hyde Park: 3.30 Music/Words event.

COUNCIL for Academic Freedom & Democracy. Open meeting on 'Intellectual Freedom and Political Control'. Speakers include Steven Rose, Eduard Goldstucker and David Caute. At London School of Economics at 3 p.m. on Sat. 16 Dec. Preceded by AGM at 2 p.m.

MEMORY TRAINING. Free seminar 1 Dec, 7.15, YWCA, Gt Russell St, WC1.

'AUTHORITY & the Individual in the New Society'. A public lecture by the Venerable Sangharakshita in the Great Hall, Caxton Hall, 7 p.m. Mon. 4 Dec. Admission 50p.

CHINESE BAZAAR Saturday 2 December 11.30 to 5.30 at Hampstead Town Hall, Haverstock Hill, NW3 (Belsize Park Tube). Large selection of bargain-priced goods from the People's Republic of China. Adm. 15p (OAPs and accompanied children free). Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding, 152 Camden High St, London NW1. Tel: 485 8236.

CENSORSHIP AND TV: Anthony Smith will address the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society's AGM in Committee Room 10 at the House of Commons, 6.30 p.m. on 4 December.

CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY, Wed. 6 Dec. 7.30 p.m. 5 Tavistock Pl, WC1. Mike Thomas MP on 'Reforming Parliament'.

THE ALTERNATIVE IN EASTERN EUROPE. Rudolf Bahro—A Symposium to discuss Bahro's ideas presented in his book, 'The Alternative in Eastern Europe'. Speakers: David Fernbach, Monty Johnstone, Gunther Minnerup, Edward Thompson, Raymond Williams. Saturday 2 December 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at New Ambassadors Hotel, Upper Woburn Place, London WC1 (near Euston Station). Admission £1.

START XMAS at the Morning Star International Bazaar Tomorrow, Friday 1 Dec. 12 noon — 9 p.m. Gifts on over 40 stalls, Books, Records, Pottery, Folkweave, Jewellery, Food, Wine, Refreshments, etc. St. Pancras Assembly Rooms, Camden Town Hall, London NW1 (nr Kings Cross Stn) Adm. 15p, OAPs & children 5p.

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Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

A MEETING of the Dylan Thomas Society on Monday 4 December at 7.30 at the Sesame Club, 49 Grosvenor Street, W1. Admission 75p.
The speaker, Richard Lewis, BBC Television producer of 'Dylan: the life and death of a poet', a drama-documentary by Paul Ferris, talks about the making of this unusual programme.

CHINA TODAY. A day of lectures, discussions, films and slides on education and culture in China. Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, WC1. 10 a.m. — 4 p.m. Fee £3.

THE ADDICTIVE and Social Aspects of Gambling. Monday 12 and Tuesday 13 February 1979. Seminar organised by University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies and Gamblers Anonymous General Services Board (UK) for members of Probation and Social Services. Details from: Extra-Mural Department, 26 Russell Square, WC1B 5DQ. Telephone 01-636 8000 extension 266.

WHITE COLLAR CRIME. Satuday 13 January 1979. Speakers: Gerald Mars; Peter Mitchell; Michael Clarke; Leonard Lee; Stuart Henry and W. C. Humphreys. In the Chair: Professor Terence Morris. Details from: Extra-Mural Department, 26 Russell Square, WC1B 5DQ. Telephone 01-636 8000 extension 266.

ADLERIAN SOCIETY. 'Working with Under-Fives', informal talk with audience participation, Tim Smithells, BA(Hons), MPhil. (New Zealand), Child Therapists. Tuesday 5 Dec., 7.30 p.m. Mary Sumner Hall, 24 Tufton St, SW1. Visitors welcome 50p (students 25p).

'INTRODUCING EGYPTIAN MYSTERIES', a talk by Miss Jeanine Miller. 7 p.m. Sun. 3 Dec. The Theosophical Society in England, 50 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3HJ. Tel. 01-935 9261.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE. 23 Norfolk Sq., W2. Sun. 3 Dec. Swami Bhavyananda, 'The Lord's Prayer' at 5 p.m. All welc. Vedanta mag. 50p.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Public Talk Sun. 3 Dec. 8 p.m. 'Man, Mortal & Immortal'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2.

WORKERS' REVOLUTIONARY PARTY. Rally 'Five Years of the WRP', Sunday 10 Dec. 4 p.m. Kensington Town Hall, Hornton St (off Kensington High St). Speakers: Alex Mitchell (Central Cttee), Corin Redgrave (Cent. Cttee), Mike Banda (Gen. Sec.), Clare Dixon (YS Nat. Sec.), Terry Beckwith (London FBU E Divisional Sec. in personal capacity). Chairman Cliff Slaughter (Cen. Cttee). Plus premiere showing of Dutch film 'Palestine' (won 1st Prize 1978 Baghdad Film Festival. Tickets £1.00 from WRP, 218 Old Town, London SW4. 01-622 7029.

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Publications

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OUTPOSTS. Poems invited for future issues. Sae to Howard Sergeant, 72 Burwood Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, KT12 4AL.

JAMES BURKE 'CONNECTIONS'. The magnificently illustrated companion volume to James Burke's current BBC-1 TV series is now on sale at bookshops £7.95.

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